UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

REEL KIDS:

PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEPICTIONS OF CHILDREN IN TWENTIETH CENTURY HOLLYWOOD FILM

BY

DIANNE LINDEN ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Education

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled REEL KIDS: PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEPICTIONS OF CHILDREN IN TWENTIETH CENTURY HOLLYWOOD FILM submitted by Dianne Marie Linden in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTERS OF EDUCATION.

Dr. Max van Manen

Dr. Joe Norris

Dr. Roberta McKay

July 5, 1999

for my granddaughter
erika kiel jessen
radiant, radiant, radiant

ABSTRACT

In this reflective study I examine images of children in Hollywood film throughout the Twentieth Century – sometimes called the Century of the Child. I inquire into changes that may have occurred in these images since the beginning of the century. I further inquire into ways these images may shape our pedagogical perceptions of off-screen children.

I begin the study by reviewing popular images of children in history and look for related images in narrative film throughout the century. I then explore two films dealing with the same narrative from different eras: *The Little Princess* (1939) and *A Little Princess* (1995). Interpretation of these films is based on their cinematic construction as well as on pedagogical theory. Further reflections follow, highlighting differences in the two girls' film lives, especially the presence or absence of pedagogical relationships. I conclude with a personal reflection on some implications the study raises for me, and a number of thesis statements arising from the work.

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INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of the Twentieth Century, viewers watching silent, one-reel films like *Children of the Tenements* (1908) and *Child of the Ghetto* (1910) were undoubtedly appalled by images of small children laboring in dirty factories. Their heads drooped with fatigue. They pleaded for food and rest. Some seemed to faint and fall to the ground. Viewers knew these children were acting, and yet they did not quite know that. They were disturbed by that not-quite-knowing. It was the beginning of the so-called 'Century of the Child,' and movies were a new and over-whelming phenomenon."[1] Reel and off-screen worlds were not easy for audiences to separate.

At the close of the same century I like to think of myself as more sophisticated. I was born in the forties, and I grew up with movies – grainy, black and white melodramas and gangster films that later, and more satisfyingly, blossomed into color. Going to the movies has always been an established part of my life. And yet I wonder if I am so sophisticated after all. It's true that when I see the young man with sharply pointed scissors where his hands should be in *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), I know some trick or gimmick is involved. But when he is unfairly blamed and hunted by people in the town he has come to live in, I am not thinking about that gimmick. I have come to sense his humanness and feel concern for him. I believe I even take on something of his life-experience and feel frightened or lonely <u>with</u> him. Some part of those feelings stays with me after I leave the theater. Even if I dislike a film or think it is poorly made, I believe that is still the case. Over time those feelings and the images associated with them become inseparable with the rest of my life. I may at times even confuse them with my own dreams and memories.

For most of my life I have considered movies a form of entertainment. Not until fairly recently did I give serious thought to the insight movies have offered

viewers since images of the first reel kids flickered before our ancestors' astonished eyes. Participating in a course called Studies in Pedagogy at the University of Alberta has changed the way I look at film, however. During that course we watched many films involving images of children and discussed the presence and quality of pedagogical relationships in their lives. Frequently we noted the absence of those relationships. I gradually became aware that reel kids can be model subjects for inquiry and came to wonder about the changes that had occurred in their cinematic lives after almost a century of existence.

A Rationale for Studying Reel Kids

Any hour of the day it is possible to watch a movie or video in which reel kids go about the business of living their lives. If we choose to we can see their images over and over again, noticing how they are dressed, and where they appear in each frame. They are completely reliable. At each viewing they walk and talk in the same way, reacting to identical events with the same nuances, the same timing and with the same narrative outcome for themselves and those around them.

Traditional studies of children have tended to view them through adult intellect and within adult contexts, using adult observational skills to arrive at adult conclusions. Resulting conceptualizations of childhood have therefore had little to do with the lived-experience of children.[2] Yet by immersing ourselves in the visual and auditory detail of reel kids' personal experiences we may be able to recapture at least a sense of what their lives are like at the close of the Twentieth Century. In so doing we may even refresh an area of research historically lacking in child-centeredness.

If, like our movie-going ancestors we come to film as a fresh experience and a way of seeing rather than merely a rote form of entertainment or escape, we may also learn something about how we view children in the off-screen world.

In both its creation and reception, film is one of the most collective of art forms. Something about its essence escapes the control of even the most dominant directors, resulting in a final product that hones out individual idiosyncrasies in favor of a group view of what is, or should be.[3]

If that group view strikes a responsive and dialogic chord in audiences, a cycle of films and film clones is often created which repeatedly explores the same issues in the same way.[4] I believe I can safely say that when we look at mainstream Hollywood movies, we are looking at what the majority of North American film audiences have either believed about children, or at least have been willing to leave unchallenged about them. Hollywood films will not portray what audiences will not pay to see.

Sitting in the Back Seat

When I go to the movies as a researcher, I usually sit at the back of the theater. The balance between detachment and involvement I find by sitting that far from the screen helps me resist being entirely taken over by a medium specifically designed to seduce viewers into non-reflective attention. As the "father of film technique," D. W. Griffith structured his earliest silent movies that way and the grammar he created is still a staple component of mainstream films today.[5]

Through conscious manipulation of time and space, character-motivated cinematography and editing, as well as the privileging of narrative over other aspects of a movie, his films made it almost impossible for viewers unaccustomed to motion pictures to retain any kind of detached or critical relationship with them. Due to a host of advances in production technique, Hollywood films seem even more compellingly 'real' today.

It is largely for that reason that the primary voice I have chosen for these reflections on reel kids and their movie lives is the somewhat detached 'we' of the back seat in a movie theater. There are points, on the other hand, when a more personal and immediate voice seems appropriate. As teacher, parent and grandparent I feel a strong commitment to children. I want to acknowledge at certain points the reactions and positions that are strongly my own, in the same way that I have already acknowledged my history with film and the experiences that have caused me to undertake this study.

Defining Reel Kids

Generally I have used the term 'children' in these reflections to represent all offspring of adults. 'The child' I sometimes speak of can be generic, as in phrases such as 'The Evil Child,' or 'The Child in Film.' But more specifically, a child is someone between the ages of approximately two and twelve. Children younger than that are infants or babies. Thirteen and fourteen-year-olds are youths or pre-teens, while teenagers and adolescents are roughly between the ages of fifteen to eighteen.

Historical studies often refer to the child as 'it,' as in the child needs *its* supper, or as male: the child needs *his* supper. Throughout these reflections I assume that children are of both genders, never neuter. I have therefore used female or male pronouns interchangeably when gender is not established by context.

Choosing what Movies to See

Documentary films offer historical verisimilitude. European films such as *My Life as a Dog* (1985) or *Kolya* (1996) promise rich insight into children's experience. But these are not the films whose images bombard our consciousness day after day, and month after month. They are less frequently produced and their distribution makes them inaccessible except to those who

actively seek them out in specialized theaters or video stores. Mainstream Hollywood narrative films on the other hand, have been and still are integral parts of child and adult experience throughout this century. They saturate our society.[6]

As we look at the many Hollywood narrative films that have depicted children since the birth of the industry, it will also be important to remember that these films all fit within the genre of melodrama. As such, their structure demands they treat narrative content in a certain way. The scenario of a melodrama begins with balance or harmony in the lives of film characters. A conflict then arises, temporarily disrupting this harmony and creating personal problems for the characters in the film. Through a process of narrative reduction the conflict is eventually resolved, thereby restoring balance to reel people's lives, and to the social order within the film.[7]

As a result of this reductive process, melodramas clearly raise questions and present problems more satisfactorily than they resolve them.[8] When Shirley Temple convinces wealthy misers to give money to homeless families in the depression, their change of heart masks causes of that economic phenomenon that even millionaires cannot effect. When teenage monsters are destroyed in films of the fifties, the real or constructed problems behind the rebellious behavior of adolescents are not addressed.[9] No matter how insubstantial the solutions that melodramas propose are, however, they still reveal a great deal to us both through what they show, how they show it and what they choose not to show.

Comments on Organization

In proceeding with these reflections both historical and interpretive forms of inquiry seem appropriate. Chapter One is a brief review of conceptualizations of the child from a linear, historical perspective, whereas Chapter Two

considers whether these historical representations have been present in Hollywood narrative film throughout the Twentieth Century.

Chapters Three and Four focus on the recurring image of the innocent movie child through pedagogical inquiry into two films: *The Little Princess* (1939) and *A Little Princess* (1995). Both films focus on the narrative of Sara Crewe, heroine of a novel written by Frances Hodgeson Burnett in the late Nineteenth Century.[10] Looking carefully at the life-experience of these two girls, separated as they are by over half a century in the off-screen world, I attempt to understand the nature of the changes that have occurred in their cinematic lives. I also try to describe and interpret how movies construct images of children in ways that also shape our pedagogical perception of them.

I have referred to the girl in the 1939 film as "the thirties Sara," despite the fact that she lives in a film world set in England during the time of the Boer War. And I have referred to the girl in the 1995 film as "the nineties Sara," although she lives in New York during the period of the First World War. I think it is apparent that the era of a film's production pervades the cinematic experience of the reel kids living within it despite efforts to give the film the appearance of another time period.

Chapter Five develops the interpretive work with these films further, attempting to articulate from a pedagogical perspective how the life-experience of these two cinematic children has changed, and exploring some implications of the study. The Theses following Chapter Five synthesize some premises originating from my work as a whole.

Movies have always fascinated me. Through studying the way film has presented images of children throughout the century I have learned to view them as much more than entertainment. Not only have I seen the way

Hollywood films shape the lives of cinematic children, but I have witnessed the way they shape my vision of children in both reel and real world. While I am not necessarily happy with what I have learned, I do welcome the in/sight this inquiry into reel kids lives has afforded me.

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[1] Van den Berg (1964), p. 95. Ellen Key christened the Twentieth Century the 'Century of the Child' in 1901.

[2] Ibid., p. 22. The author comments that children themselves have been absent in most of the "pompous, solemn writing about childhood." See also Polakow-Suransky (1982), pp. 15-17.

[3] See Schatz (1981), p. vii for the definitive discussion of how genre in film facilitates a dialogue between cinematic text and viewer, or Maltby (1995), p. 109.

[4] Clover (1992), pp. 23-24. The *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) for example, was the first movie to involve teenagers in what is usually called the 'slasher' film. It acquired cult status and spawned two sequels, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986) and *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* (1990), plus a host of clones. Among them are *Halloween* (1981, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1995), *Friday the Thirteenth* (1980,1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988 and 1989) and *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984, 1985, 1987).

[5] Cook (1996), pp. 59, 101. Cook describes Griffith as the man who "discovered, synthesized and articulated the narrative language of film as it is today." Lillian Gish, who worked with Griffith, gave him the title, "father of film technique."

[6] Clips of most of the old, silent films I have described in this study are not available except in film archives such as the one maintained by the American Film Institute in New York. I have read descriptions of these films and have quoted my sources. Please check the Filmography for an indication of which films are available in better-stocked, Edmonton video stores.

[7] Maltby (1995), p. 109. See also Schatz (1981), p. 11.

[8] Schatz (1981), 31-35

[9] Elsaesser (1992), pp. 516-517. According to Elsaesser it is precisely because no easy solution exists, that Hollywood melodramas must state the problem over and over again, shattering moral codes in the process of reinforcing them.

[10] The film is based on Frances Hodgson Burnett's late Nineteenth Century work, originally published as a shorter piece, *Sara Crewe, Or What Happened at Miss Minchin's,* then written as a play, and finally as a novel titled, *A Little Princess*. See Burnett (1975).

Chapter One

THE CHILD IN HISTORY

THE UNDIFFERENTIATED CHILD

Medieval art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it. . . . Artists were unable to depict a child except as a man on a smaller scale.

Phillip Aries[1]

Pieter Bruegel, the Sixteenth Century Flemmish painter was a careful observer of peasant life, yet in his paintings he failed to depict the fact that children are quite different from adults in appearance. In *Children's Games* (1559-1560), he catalogued over eighty-four games that Flemish children played.[2] The 'children,' however look like miniature adults. His paintings support the claim made by some historians that no notion of childhood existed in any clearly defined sense of the word, prior to the 1600's.[3]

Children were swaddled and kept inactive for the first year of their lives but as soon as they were able, all except those born to noble families took on simple household tasks. By the age of seven they assumed an adult workload. Even before that time, however, they were included in the adult life of the community.

Since privacy was not an important part of adult lives, it was not afforded children, nor was any aspect of adult physical life screened from them. Intimate physical contact between young children and adults was common and the young were routinely beaten and played with sexually by family and community members. If we apply modern sensibilities to the Middle Ages in fact, almost every child living at that time could be described as physically, emotionally and/or sexually abused.[4]

THE EVIL CHILD

The young child which lieth in the cradle is both wayward and full of affections; and though his body be but small, yet he hath a reat [wrong-doing] *heart, and is altogether inclined to evil. If this sparkle be suffered to increase, it will rage over and burn down the whole house.*

Robert Cleaver and John Dod
A Godly Form of Household Government, 1621[5]

In the Seventeenth Century children received some recognition of their separateness from adults, but with that recognition came possibly greater torment and restrictions. English Puritans Robert Cleaver and John Dod wrote of the evil inherent in the smallest infant. Thomas Hobbes further declared that in a state of nature there would be, "No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Only the absolute power of the father, as family monarch, could save any child from the worst excesses of himself.[6]

Failure to discipline one's child was an affront to God, who owned both the child's soul and that of the child's parents. Control of offspring was therefore of great importance to parents of this era. Strict and aggressive adherence to the practice of swaddling contained the infant's movements, producing passive babies who slept more and cried less. It also kept their limbs and bodies from growing crooked – a sure sign that the devil within them was under physical control.[7]

Although Seventeenth Century babies were weaned and unswaddled at about a year, they were not allowed to crawl or explore their environment. Such behavior was considered animalistic. In fact children approaching two years of age were often placed for extended periods inside chair-like wooden structures that forced them to stand. When they did finally walk, these

children entered a somber and restrictive world where they were beaten for any behavior that departed from their fathers' expectations. Parenting was not a choice, after all, but a serious moral responsibility, and a beaten child was a child encouraged to follow the path of Godliness. Such encouragement could not be given too often.

THE IMMINENT CHILD

Who sees a child, sees nothing.
A Proverb from the 1500's[8]

Children desire a gentle Persuasion in Reasoning. They understand it as early as they do Language; and, if I misobserve not, they like to be treated as rational Creatures. [sic]

John Locke, 1689[9]

At some time in the early Eighteenth Century American Puritans in particular became strongly influenced by the thinking of John Locke, a doctor and minister cut from different cloth than Hobbes. Locke did not believe children were inherently evil in nature, and saw no need for physical swaddling, or restriction of early exploratory movement.[10] Rather he saw children as having no nature at all – each child a *tabula rasa* to be written on by experience. He viewed it as the task of parents and church elders to fill the inner vacuum in their offspring through education. If those responsible did not perform this task, he warned, someone or something else would.

As soon as a child was a year old and had been weaned, therefore, the serious task of education began. Parents and elders presented their children with constant lessons in obedience, manners, religion and diligence. If they were obdurate or slow to learn, some form of physical punishment was probably used, but parents were increasingly encouraged to rely more heavily on shaming their children into obedience, and frightening them with threats of

dark closets, death and damnation. It was molding a child's rational will, hardening her emotions and disciplining her intellect that mattered after all, and not controlling her physical form. We might say that the Puritans released children from physical restriction in order to confine them mentally and spiritually. The phrase "swaddled in Calvinism" seems appropriate.[11]

Undoubtedly American Puritan parents tried to stay rational and emotionally detached from their children, who were, as others of the time, still highly vulnerable to mortality. Since parenting with ideological soundness was the avowed goal, it was perhaps better not to care too much if children lived or died.[12] Despite their impersonal objective, however, Puritan parents and their children spent large amounts of time together on a daily basis, making detachment difficult to maintain. Even Cotton Mather, known for his fiery sermons about hellfire and damnation, wrote shortly after his son Samuel's birth of his own "continuing Apprehension that the Child, (tho' a lusty and hearty infant) will die in its Infancy."[13]

Since all adults were teachers of children, Puritans put great thought into pedagogical relationships. A minister in Marblehead, Massachusetts urged parents in 1727 to "teach by example," and "wait patiently on the weakness of their children." Some of the first books matched to children in both size, format and language were published by American Puritans. For example, *A Child's New Plaything*, published in 1774, urged parents to make their children's learning a diversion rather than a task.[14]

However, other Puritan leaders feared that this child-centeredness might make parents 'too fond' and their children, accordingly, too indulged. One father admitted, although with some shame, that he gave his child special treatment. He wrote to his own father in 1728, "I sometime ago gave my little Betsy a half promise to take her to Lancaster, [Pennsylvania]. She now so strenuously

presses me to keep my word that if the weather should be fitting I have thoughts of setting off with her."[15] It is difficult to imagine parents today apologizing for trying to please their children, although ambivalence toward the young seems quite familiar.

THE INNOCENT CHILD

Everything is good when it leaves the hand of the creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Émile, ou de l'education, 1762[16]

Rousseau's vision of the innocent child represents much of what we pay lip service to when we speak of modern, Western, childhood.[17] Certainly he brought into elite awareness a vision of the child as both pure in nature and capable of reason. Where Hobbes saw children as evil, Rousseau saw them as entirely without sin. Where Locke saw children as malleable creatures needing to be shaped, Rousseau saw them as free spirits, inherently good, needing to be left to their own devices. And while Locke believed children had potential to *become* through education, Rousseau believed they were already full of their own nature. Quite uniquely, he considered the essence of that nature worth the attention of intelligent adults.[18]

Maria Edgeworth was a young, English woman who brought up her sixteen younger brothers and sisters very much according to Rousseau's philosophy. In her book, *Practical Education*, she encouraged parents to treat their children with gentleness, rationality, and encouragement of natural impulses. "We shoult [sic] not prejudice either by our wisdom, or our folly, children's assertion of their own values." When asked how she knew so much about children, she replied, " I [lie down on the floor and] let them crawl all over

me."[19] Like Rousseau she was full of admiration for the qualities of openness and clarity children bring to the world.[20] In dealing with her siblings, she responded from her own child-like self. She would not, like Cotton Mather, have shunned play as an unsuitable activity for them or herself.[21]

THE CHILD AS ADULT PAST

As always where the libido is concerned, here again man has shown himself incapable of giving up a gratification he has once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo his narcissistic perfection in his childhood . . . That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood – the time when he has his own ideal.[22]

Sigmund Freud

According to Freud the mind of the child is not blank. It has structure and content. In that he seems to agree with Rousseau. But the mental content of the Freudian child is based on sexual complexes and instinctive psychic drives. The way for a child to reach maturity is to overcome, outgrow and sublimate those instincts. To do that, of course, the child needs adult, often professional, guidance.[23]

Freud's theories therefore affirmed Rousseau's notion of the substance of a child's mind, but also affirmed Locke's view of the importance of a child's early experiences in its later development. Freud also returned to the Hobbesian notion of the evil child, although that evil was now sexual rather than demonic.[24] And it was not as brutish as Hobbes had imagined. The Id was a creative and clever opponent - in Freud's metaphor a charging horse that needed to be controlled by a clever rider.[25]

Rousseau may have abandoned his own children to orphanages, or so the rumor was put about, but he gave mothers and fathers to their children in ways that had previously not been acceptable - as companions and partners in an at least partially co-responsive relationship. Freud also saw the importance of parents to children's lives, although he seemed to focus on the reverse of that relationship. If parents influenced their children through upbringing, children and childhood provided the key for adults to understand their own lives. Children therefore became meaningful primarily as they allowed adults to understand their own present existence.[26] Looked at in terms of significance, the child was again emptied of importance in and for himself. Looked at in terms of nature, the evil/sexual child had once again returned.[27]

THE DEVELOPMENTAL CHILD

A good example of operatory causality is infantile atomism as it is derived from additive operations and from the conservation that results from them. In connection with experiments in conservation we once asked children from five to twelve what happens after lumps of sugar are dissolved in a glass of water. For children up to about seven, the dissolved sugar disappears and its taste vanishes like a mere odor; for children seven to eight its substance is retained without either its weight or its volume. After nine or ten, conservation of weight is present, and after eleven or twelve, there is also conservation of volume . . .This is a fine example of a causal explanation by the projection into reality of an operatory composition.[28]

Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder

Piaget's work, like that of Maria Montessori, Friedrich Froebel and Arnold Gesell, is directly in line with Rousseau's. Children again acquired substance in their own right. But as a scientist, Piaget saw his relationship to the child differently than had Rousseau, who seemed to believe in the principle of benign neglect in adult-child interactions. Piaget attempted to describe and understand the way children grew through a series of orderly, developmental

stages. In so doing he refocused attention on the present experience of the child, turning away from the power of history.

Piaget's notion of genetic epistemology has been extremely influential among educators, doctors and child-care workers, and has no doubt made it possible for child-centered adults to become better able to view a child's life in terms of his mental processes. Thanks to Piaget, when a child is unable to subtract we may now determine that it is because he is not ready to, and not because he is stupid or lazy or bad.

However, Piaget's standards for a child's developmental growth are based on adult categories of thought. They tell us primarily that children don't see the world as adults do, and that children don't talk about experience in the same way. In the end Piaget is unable to take into account the full measure of the child's being – the more-than-mind that a child represents. This is typified by a conversation he had with a four-year-old girl who asked him about elephant wings. He told her they had none – they couldn't fly. The girl insisted that they did fly and, in fact, she had seen them doing it. To this Piaget responded, "You must be joking." Whatever issues the child was struggling with did not emerge from the conversation because Piaget was attempting to understand her through his logical adult frame of reference. What she was attempting to understand we will never know.[29]

Historical views of children have ranged from Hobbes' child filled with evil, to Locke's child empty of essence. The evil child had to be beaten to keep her from corrupting those she came in contact with. The empty or imminent child had to be broken in spirit and filled with a rational understanding of God's will in order to keep him from being filled by something less acceptable. Both

these children were dangerous to adults and the social order in their own ways.

Rousseau gave us the innocent child filled with a capacity for goodness and reason, requiring only to be allowed time to explore his own capacities. Freud revisited the evil child, combining Rousseau's sense of her natural substance with Locke's view that education keeps children from going bad. In Freud's case the education was psychotherapy – a talking cure which also provided a means of ridding children of demons. Piaget quantified the child in scientific fashion and reassembled her in linear stages of development.

Images of the child created by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Freud and even Piaget occur again and again in discourses concerning children, as well as in the media and even in daily conversation. "That kid is full of the devil," a teacher says in the staffroom, commenting on a particularly difficult female student.
"And her brother was such an angel," another teacher responds.
"I suppose she's jealous," another adds. "She probably feels she can't live up to his example."
Still another says, "I wouldn't get too worked up. It's probably just a stage she's going through."
The father's response that evening when the teacher phones and complains about the girl is to ask if the teacher is keeping his daughter busy. "I keep her busy at home," he says, "and then she doesn't have time to get into trouble. If you let her play around, what can you expect?"

At the moment this telephone conversation is taking place, the girl's mother may be standing in the checkout line at the supermarket. If she takes a tabloid from the magazine rack and leafs through it while she is waiting, on one page she will read about a child with razor sharp teeth found in a cave. Part human

and part bat, the paper nicknames him 'Bat Boy,' and details the swath of terror and destruction he creates when he escapes from the cave. On another page she can read about the deathbed vision of Saint Teresa Benedicta in which the circlet of roses worn on an innocent young girl's head dropped seeds that become grain to feed the world's hungry people.

On still another page the mother will find recounted an expose of a woman in Ireland who makes her three young children sleep on shelves in the linen closet so that she can have the only bedroom in the apartment to herself. Although the room is spacious enough for additional beds, she says the children are restless at night and keep her awake, so she feels quite justified in restricting their movements.[30]

If, on the other hand, the girl's mother chooses to ignore these sensational tabloid articles and glances at the newspaper instead, she will learn that violent crimes committed by teenage girls have tripled in the last ten years.[31] These crimes, according to a judge involved in one case, carry all the earmarks of a rise in dangerous, sociopathic behavior. Even the small, community-oriented newspaper warns of an increase in repeat pregnancies among teen mothers.[32] What she will make of all this as she hurries her groceries into the car is difficult to say.

The good child who saves us from disaster: the evil or monstrous child who wreaks destruction and vengeance on the world: the child whose natural inclinations must be controlled: the violent or libidinous child - all these images still surround and bewilder us at the close of the Twentieth Century. Perhaps nowhere, however, do we encounter these old and deeply imbedded images more frequently or more vividly, than we do at the movies.

[1] Ariès (1962), pp. 10 and 33. Ariès' argument has frequently been disputed, however. See Lasareff (1938), pp. 26-65, for example. Lasareff gathered a vast collection of iconographic images of Madonna and Child from the middle ages which challenge this assertion.

[2] Hughes (1967), pp. 94 and 112 and plate LXI.

[3] Postman (1982), p. 15.

[4] De Mause (1974), p. 3.

[5] Postman, (1982), p. 47. See also Illick (1974), pp. 316-317.

[6] James (1990), p. 12. The original quote is from John Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Pt. I, Chapter13, 1651.

[7] De Mause (1974), pp. 37 and 50. Swaddling at this time was such a complicated process that it took up to two hours to complete. Once swaddled, children were often left in their wrappings for the entire day. Crippled limbs, gangrene and even retardation sometimes resulted. Swaddled children walked later and showed less curiosity about their surroundings. From a modern point of view, the only argument in favor of the practice seems to be that at the age of a year, when children were unswaddled, they were more vulnerable to accidents and various kinds of physical and sexual abuse.

[8] Ibid., p. 24.

[9] Van den Berg (1964) p. 22. The original quote is from John Locke, *Book II*, chapter I, section 2, 1689.

[10] See Walizer (1974), for a detailed discussion of American Puritan child-rearing practices. See also James (1990), p. 18 and Postman (1974), p. 59.

[11] Walizer (1974), p. 331.

[12] Illick (1974) p. 325. The mortality rate in America at this time was about one out of ten.

[13] Ibid., pp. 326-27.

[14] Walizer (1974), pp. 371-72. The title of this book is interesting since "play" was a concept that caused Puritans concern. Cotton Mather, for instance, wrote that he never rewarded his students for learning by offering them an opportunity to play. Instead, he offered them an opportunity to learn more. See also Illick (1974), p. 331. Illick claims that despite their severity, Eighteenth Century American Puritans have been called the first child-centered educators.

[15] Ibid., p. 373.

[16] James (1990), p. 19.

[17] Ibid., p. 14.

[18] Robertson (1974), p. 407.

[19] Ibid., pp. 420-421. Originally published by Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth in *Practical Education*, 1801. The extent to which American parents took or did not take Rousseau's intellectual theories to heart is a research topic on its own.

[20] James, *Theorizing Childhood*, p. 15. This is an unpublished manuscript.

[21] Illick (1974), p. 331. Although there are accounts of fathers carrying their sons on their shoulders, play was not a consistent part of American Puritan life.

[22] Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism." Quoted in Alford (1988), pp. 125 – 126.

[23] Postman (1982), p. 62.

[24] James (1990), pp. 23-24.

[25] Bruner (1986), p. 140.

[26] De Mause (1974), p. 2.

[27] Van den Berg (1964), p. 96. According to van den Berg, children were much safer before psychiatrists existed.

[28] Piaget (1969), p. 111-112.

[29] Bettelheim (1976), pp. 119-120.

[30] All these items are reported in Weekly World News, November 10, 1998.

[31] Calgary Herald, front page, May 9, 1998.

[32] Edmonton Examiner, front page, April 24, 1998. Single mothers experiencing 'repeat pregnancies' has risen from 13 percent in 1970 to 22.3 percent in 1998.

Chapter Two

THE CHILD IN FILM

THE INNOCENT OR SENTIMENTALIZED CHILD

There is no such thing as a bad boy.
Father Flannigan in *Boy's Town* (1938)

The word 'innocent' derives from the Latin *in*, meaning absence of, and *nocent*, meaning wicked or evil. It is also related to *nocere*, meaning harmful. An innocent child in an etymological sense is therefore one who is not evil, and does not cause harm. Whether or not that defines an innocent child in Hollywood narrative film remains to be seen.[1] Initially, at least, it seems to have been true, although Victorian sentiment often carried images of innocent children to extremes.

The best known example of youthful cinematic innocence is probably *The Kid* (1921). In that film Charlie Chaplin finds an abandoned baby and takes him home, although not entirely out of pity. Chaplin tries depositing the baby in empty carriages and storage boxes, but nothing works. He simply cannot get rid of the baby no matter how he tries. He attempts to raise The Kid (who never does get a name), although it is difficult to determine who is really the parent in the relationship.

Often The Kid is responsible for care giving. Audiences see him cooking breakfast at the age of four while Chaplin lies in bed, then running off to break windows in the neighborhood so that Chaplin can earn money by repairing them. After a period of three or four years the state ultimately intervenes and The Kid is reunited with his birth mother. Despite this seemingly positive outcome, the *mise-en-scène* of the film charges the seizing of The Kid by

welfare authorities with negative overtones. These representatives of "the hands of man" are depicted as breaching the sanctity of the home and separating child from 'parent' in a scene that is heart wrenching to watch, even today.

However, the true kid in the film is Chaplin himself. It is his life that is made difficult at the end of the film, not The Kid's. Whether or not this was problematic for viewers in 1921, it produces no particular dissonance for modern audiences. We are familiar with the *puer eternus* in current films like *Father's Day* (1997) and *Jungle 2 Jungle* (1997), as well as a host of action films in which men of power behave like enraged children. What may be more of a surprise is the realization that recognizing the real child in Hollywood films has apparently been difficult from the beginning.

Many less well known silent films depicted children's innocence not in terms of their harmlessness, but helplessness.[2] *Children of the Tenements*: *Song of the Shirt* (1908) and *Child of the Ghetto* (1910) depicted children as victims of American industrialization. *A Traffic in Souls* (1913) revealed the torment of young girls captured by white slavers. *Where Are My Children?* (1916) portrayed the anger of a father who learns that his wife has been too preoccupied with her own life to bear his children and has had a succession of abortions. *Birth Control* (1917) and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1917) offered the view that children are oppressed by the sheer number of their brothers and sisters, as are their mothers who must struggle to bring them up in poverty.[3]

As the needs of The Kid were generally eclipsed by the needs of the 'adult' in his life, any attempt to look at children as individuals in these early problem films is secondary to the ammunition they provided various political causes. Other silent films made use of children's harmlessness with less emphasis on

suffering, but with equal insistence on the rightness of Rousseau's natural child. Because of their exuberance and high energy these children often got into trouble, causing them to look guilty while in their hearts, they remained innocent. Hollywood melodramas were very fond of these children.[4]

The *Our Gang* comedies (1922-1929) were a series of ninety-six two reel films about "everyday, small town children who get sick, get lost, and get into trouble trying to grow up. They try to imitate their elders and bollix things up because of their innocence."[5] One episode showed members of the gang having their pants sucked off by a vacuum cleaner. Another showed a child in knitted pants sitting on a piano stool. A cat unraveled the pants while the child spun around and around.

Our Gang children were Rousseauistic free spirits who not only functioned primarily outside of adult relationships, but also exposed the foolishness of those adults they did come into contact with. When they appeared with a teacher they showed us how unable adults were to deal with youthful ingenuity and enthusiasm. Rules laid down for them by their parents were inadequate and easily broken with no lasting consequences.

In the decades following the *Our Gang* phenomenon, the humiliation or corruption of children was often presented as entertaining. (*Sitting Pretty*, 1948; *Cheaper by the Dozen*, 1950; *The Cowboys*, 1972; *Paper Moon*, 1973) Yet despite this tendency to trivialize reel kid's 'innocence,' Hollywood narratives have consistently attached alchemical abilities to that quality.

In so doing these films seem to be acting in accordance with our cultural history. The prophet Isiah envisioned an innocent child guiding the faithful to a peaceable kingdom where lions and lambs could lay down together. Every year Christians celebrate the salvation of the world in the birth of a holy child.

Fairy and folk tales abound with children who have recourse to magical gifts with problem-solving properties. When all else fails, it seems, and the world is in need of a miracle, it is often a little cinematic child who leads us.

THE REDEEMING OR ALCHEMICAL CHILD

Dorothy: *Will you help me? Can you help me?*
Glinda,
The Good Witch: *You don't need to be helped any more. . You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.*

The Wizard of Oz (1938)

The first image of a child in American narrative film is one of rescue, although not of a child being rescued. In The *Great Train Robbery* (1904), audiences watched a five-year old girl untie a hijacked railroad stationmaster, who also happened to be her father, and throw water in his face to bring him to consciousness.[6] Her rescue allowed her father to telegraph the hold-up of the station to the proper authorities, and ensured the bandits' capture, as well as the return of the money stolen from the station's safe.

The *Adventures of Dolly* (1908) portrayed the life of a young girl kidnapped by gypsies. Her adventures included shooting the rapids in a barrel. She was finally rescued from the water by a group of young boys out fishing, her parents only appearing at the end of the film when the boys returned Dolly to their welcoming arms. The ineffectiveness of parents in reel kids lives is already apparent in this early film.

The theme of something stolen or lost as the occasion of a chase was repeated again and again in silent films, and that 'something', called decades later by Alfred Hitchcock 'The McGuffin,' was frequently a child.[7] Narratively these films may merely have used a child as a focal point for action, but the

image of that child presented was complex. She was valuable, otherwise audiences wouldn't care if she were found or not. She was vulnerable, otherwise audiences wouldn't worry about her safe return. And she was also indestructible. She shot rapids, or fell off cliffs, but no amount of friendly abuse could destroy her.

Children in these early silent films were so resilient and survived so well in fact, that they were able to rescue what was rightfully theirs, as well as each other. In *Let Katie Do It* (1915) a troupe of seven theatrical children known as the 'Fine Arts Kiddies' defended their homestead from Mexican bandits. In *A Sister of Six* (1916) the same troupe make up a group of orphans who fought to retain ownership of land rich in gold.[8]

In succeeding decades the rescues children brought about were moral or spiritual rather than physical. In *Acquitted* (1916) a bookkeeper found guilty of embezzling money from his employer attempted suicide, but was saved by his young daughter. In *Just Pals* (1921) a three-year-old redeemed the town tramp and *The Godless Girl* (1929) carried the abilities of redemption to new levels, rescuing herself from a life of impending social and moral ruin.[9]

As a child star, Shirley Temple's film persona was largely based on her ability to solve the problems of everyone around her in alchemical fashion. In *Baby, Take a Bow* (1934), *Little Miss Marker* (1935) and *Curly Top* (1935) she saved adults from the law, taught them to get down on their knees and pray, or sing and be happy. She went even further in *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937) by forcing a Hindu rebel to sign a peace treaty, softening her Uncle's regime at a British army post and finding a husband for her widowed mother. [10]

Though often homeless and destitute herself, she appeared happy to look after adults in this fashion. To any labor required of her, she always

responded, "Yes." She never questioned, "Why should I do that? What's in it for me?" Shirley Temple was a rescuing angel, and as such, the embodiment of her parents' and elders' wishes.

The character Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), however, is probably the most widely known movie representation of a child's alchemical power. Dorothy wielded magical power far more effective than the tricks of the Wizard of Oz himself, who proved to be a sham. She and her dog Toto conquered the evil of several witches while aiding the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion in the realization of their deepest dreams.

It is important to note, however, that the narrative reveals Dorothy's power in the film to be imaginary – a power from which she can awake and return to normalcy.[11] She briefly insists that she has been to an actual place but is ultimately happy to admit that Kansas is where she wants to be. "There's no place like home," Dorothy says, once again an obedient and non-threatening child.

Forties movie children extended their transformative abilities to dogs, horses mules, and lambs, making champions out of animals whose potential had been missed by adults.[12] As the decade progressed, however, even reel kids could not make moral survival a matter of 'child's play.' Their lives began to take on a suffering quality that was more than sentimental. In *A Little Bit of Heaven* (1940), *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1945), *The Yearling* (1946), *I Remember Mama* (1948) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1949) audiences saw young boys and girls shorn of alchemy, struggling to come to terms with the realities of growing up in trying environments.

Each of the main characters in these films ultimately took his or her place beside a significant adult in a world that called them to sacrifice. The role of

that adult in their lives was to repeat and reinforce the rules of the social order. An unspoken contract bound the father and son in *The Yearling*, for example, helping the son to understand that when he got knocked down, he took it for his share and went on. The harshness of the world called these children, as it did their Puritan ancestors, to a life of sacrifice and surrender of will. The surrender called for, however, was not to the will of God, but to the dictates of a rigidly prescribed social order. Happy salvation of anyone by anyone else seemed out of the question.

Looking at the angry, disaffected and disillusioned young people in films of the fifties, sixties and seventies it would seem that the alchemical child had vanished forever from cinema narratives. Whether on a cattle drive, (*The Culpepper Cattle Company*, 1972) or in the dust of a dying Texas town (*The Last Picture Show*, 1971), these young people are unable to change anything for the better. Redemption no longer seems automatically within the grasp of Hollywood's movie kids. In that they break with centuries of cultural tradition and fifty years of movie history.

Teenaged boys attending an Arizona summer camp in *Bless the Beasts and the Children* (1971) have all had problems at home or in their personal lives. Ostracized by their peers, who call them "bedwetters," they visit a government preserve where hunters pay to kill corralled weaklings from a buffalo herd and plot to free the animals. In the process of carrying out their plan, one of them is killed. The buffalo break free, but the boys, themselves corralled because of inherent weaknesses, cannot so easily rescue themselves. Alchemy apparently could not be envisioned in a world where the base and the precious were indistinguishable. The weakening of the miraculous child was such that in *Benji* (1974), one of Hollywood's formerly transformative children needs to be rescued by a dog.

Bad News Bears (1976) reintroduced the possibility of children transforming themselves and the adults around them. Their sobering effect on their seedy, alcoholic coach was apparently more significant than any unsavory influence he may have had on them.[13] In *Starwars* (1977) Luke Skywalker saved an entire galaxy through his heroism and single-minded dedication. The Force assisted him in that accomplishment, as did two friendly, childlike machines, R2D2 and C3P0.[14]

Then in 1982, a ten-year-old boy named Elliot found a friendly, childlike extra-terrestrial and helped him return to his home planet (*E. T: The Extra-terrestrial*). With this film the image of the child-as-miracle-worker returned to the screen in full force. *E. T.* places such emphasis on Elliot's point-of-view that it treats non-children, in other words adults, with either wariness or mistrust. All of the adult males in the film, for instance, are faceless, and none is shown beyond their midriffs. Elliot's mother, struggling to raise her children as a single parent is basically ineffectual. *E.T.* clearly demonstrates that only children understand what is important in life. Aliens themselves in an adult-oriented world, they must act to save the extra-terrestrial alone.[15]

Three years later, Marty McFly brought about one of the most amazing transformations in Hollywood cinematic history. Marty is a teenager in *Back to the Future* (1985) who unintentionally, and in good Freudian fashion becomes a metahistorical agent. He travels back in time, rescues his parents from their dull, mediocre lives and in the process changes the meaning of history.[16] He doesn't choose the role of rescuer, but rather flees into the future to escape pursuit by international agents. Nor does he plan to go back to the period of his parent's adolescence. And since an eccentric professor has constructed the car he travels in, his ability to operate it is somewhat improvisational. Once situated in 1955, however, Marty is as doughty and self-reliant as any of the 'Fine Arts Kiddies.'

In Marty, the magically redemptive power that Dorothy enjoyed in *Wizard of Oz* returns to Hollywood. But the ending of the film charges Marty's role with a different meaning. Whereas the narrative of *The Wizard of Oz* made it very clear to audiences that Dorothy's power was imaginary, Marty McFly's power is real. He *is* able to go back in time. He *is* able to change the past for his parents, so that in the future they can become attractive, affluent people he can be proud of.[17] No matter how seriously adults have mismanaged the world, Marty McFly again presents audiences with the miraculous and redemptive child – now a good and glowing adolescent - who can, and does, save the world from and for adults.

Despite the good done to adults through Marty's journey, however, the power to travel to places adults cannot follow was not always so acceptable. In *Return to Oz* (1985), Dorothy refuses to deny the validity of her own experience refusing to espouse the view that "there's no place like home." She insists that there is a place called Oz, and she has been there. Fearing for her mental health, her Aunt and Uncle have her committed to a sanitarium where in a truly repellent scene, a doctor and his fiendish nurse attempt to give her shock treatments. She escapes during a terrible thunderstorm and manages to return to Oz, but finds evil in power there, as well. More perilous to Dorothy than all the witches in the land Oz, it seems, is her insistence on the rightness of her own vision in the face of reel adult disbelief.

Films released in the closing years of the eighties saw a renewed interest in the ability of babies to change the quality of adult lives.[18] Among them *Baby Boom* (1987) depicts a female business executive who inherits a baby, and *Three Men and a Baby* (1987) describes three bachelors who experience the same fate. In both these films, caring for a small child positively influences the lives of the adult characters in the film. In *Raising Arizona* (1987) a misfit couple kidnaps one quintuplet because they've always wanted children. Their

lives are also transformed, as are the lives of the humans and nelwins who try to save the magical baby Elora Danan from the powers of darkness in *Willow* (1988). Her survival guarantees the renewal of all that is good in the world. *For Keeps* (1988) takes a darker view of the power of a child to create change as it examines, however glibly, the way pregnancy forces a teenage mother to mature, whether or not she is ready to do so.

In the closing decade of this 'Century of the Child,' Hollywood continues its fascination with innocent children, but represents them with increasing fragmentation. Reel kids still bring about rescues, as they care for the earth, and work to save endangered animals in *The Amazing Panda Adventure* (1995), *Free Willy* (1992), *Free Willy II* (1995), and *Flipper* (1996). *In Angels in the Outfield* (1994) they even extend their attention to an endangered baseball team, although they do receive celestial assistance in bringing about that transformation.[19]

Nineties movie children still communicate with animals in ways adults cannot imitate or even quite understand. In *Andre* (1994) the animal in question is a seal, in *Dragonworld* (1994) a dragon, in *Dunston Checks In* (1996) an orangutan, in *Fly Away Home* (1996) a flock of Canada Geese, and in *Shiloh*, (1997) a mistreated dog.

They also still suffer for those they love in films like *Iron Will* (1994) and *The Cure* (1995). But the same Victorian innocence that caused audiences to weep when they saw *The Kid* provides comic relief in films like *Jungle 2 Jungle* (1997) and *Liar Liar* (1997). At the same time movies such as *A Little Princess* (1996) call the existence of Hollywood's traditional 'innocent' child into question. Far from appearing guilty while being innocent, she appears innocent yet in some way seems guilty. The ability to rescue herself or anybody else has ceased to exist.[20]

Still, time travel and miracles are within the province of some nineties movie children. *Matilda* (1996) tells the story of a ten-year-old girl by the same name who overcomes a history of parental abuse and neglect through magic. Like Marty McFly, Matilda has the power to make substantial changes in her world, as do the time-travelling brother and sister in *Pleasantville* (1998). Unlike Marty, however, they make these changes not out of interest in their own personal futures, but for what they perceive to be the general good of the population. As they introduce the citizens of Pleasantville to sexual feelings and personal choice, they invert the traditional movie child's task, acting to subvert societal norms, rather than upholding them. This reversal seems an interesting switch in reel adult and reel kid roles.

Perhaps more interesting are the heroic feats accomplished by eight-year-old Kevin McCallister in *Home Alone* (1990).[21] Kevin's parents inadvertently leave him behind when they fly to Paris for a Christmas holiday. Before they leave they witlessly give information about the dates of their departure and return to Harry, a burglar disguised as a security man. Kevin thwarts the equally witless Harry and his partner Marv, and survives without his parents, but not through goodness or self-sacrifice.[22] Instead he draws on his highly polished consumer knowledge to save himself and his parents' property. Definitely a child who has been taught by television and learned his lessons well, his exploits become paeans to commercialism as he commands the world of electronic appliances and commercial products.[23]

It is difficult, of course, to call Kevin a child when he appears the only functional human being in his movie world. Perhaps he is an innocent adult and his parents and the two bandits are depraved children. The distinctions between these stages seem as blurred as they were when Brugel painted adult-like children at a Sixteenth Century wedding feast. However, the fact

that Kevin is a chronological child and is still able to rescue his family property and himself casts him in a familiar and popular Hollywood narrative role.

DANGEROUS CHILDREN: THE CHILD AS TEMPTER OF ADULTS

Adult emotions of love and grief glissade across
the mask of childhood - a childhood skin-deep.

Graham Greene
1937

Hobbes and his contemporaries in Seventeenth Century England warned that there lurked a flicker of something evil within children, and that failure to contain that "sparkle" would have dire implications. One incendiary effect displayed by movie children is their ability, if unwittingly, to light dangerous fires of desire in adults. Mary Pickford, played the role of a sweet, ringletted young girl in films like *Tess of the Storm Country* (1914) and *A Poor Little Rich Girl* (1917). Her innocence was frequently tested in these movies but always transcendent. However, Pickford was twenty-six by the time she made *Poor Little Rich Girl* and her portrayal of innocence carried a hint of something a little more than childlike as she flirted and coquetishly tossed her curls. Through her portrayal audiences glimpsed the 'innocent' child as an object of desire.[24]

Pickford's age may explain the overlaying of adult desire on the supposed face of a child. Shirley Temple, however was only four when she made *War Babies* (1932). In that film she danced and posed vampishly in a peasant blouse and diapers while other toddlers in diapers played musical instruments.[25] The next year in *Kid in Hollywood*, she wore spangles and propped her leg on a chair like a miniature version of Marlene Dietrich.

Graham Greene commented in his column on Temple's sexualized image, accusing her of pretending childhood and shamming innocence. Behind her façade, he implied something darker waited. He wrote:

> "In *Captain January* she wore trousers with the mature suggestiveness of a Dietrich: her neat and well-developed rump twisted in the tap-dance: her eyes had a sidelong searching coquetry. Now in *Wee Willie Winkie*, wearing short kilts, she is a complete topsy. . . Adult emotions of love and grief glissade across the mask of childhood, a childhood skin-deep. (Emphasis added.)
>
> Her admirers – middle-aged men and clergymen – respond to her dubious coquetry, to the sight of her well-shaped and desirable little body, packed with enormous vitality, only because the safety curtain of story and dialogue drops between their intelligence and their desire."[26]

Shirley Temple was nine years old at the time Greene wrote this article yet he still held her responsible for the fantasies of middle-aged men, even as the characters she played in film worked to save their cinematic counterparts from moral torpor. Innocent movie children might rescue adults but despite that, it began to appear that they could not entirely be trusted.

Perhaps because he was male, Mickey Rooney, as Andy Hardy, publicly experienced puberty with no such incriminations.[27] Andy was an innocent and irrepressible young boy whose up-standing family sheltered his existence. If John Locke's fence against the world was knowledge of it, Andy Hardy spent increasing amounts of time peeking through a knothole in that fence at what Hollywood has always interpreted as the most desirable and forbidden knowledge of all. Andy grew older in a series of films, beginning with *A Family Affair* (1937).[28] His curiosity appeared benign – his goal a date and perhaps a chaste kiss – but audiences knew and apparently accepted the outcome of his inquiry.

On the other hand, Andy Hardy may not have been as naïve as he seemed. Even the energy and exuberance demonstrated by the dancing in *Wizard of*

Oz revealed a force inside these movie children that adults might not be able to control.[29] Hobbesian and Lockean hackles raised in warning. Reel kids were definitely not as harmless as they appeared.

Baby Doll (1956) contained the most blatant image of a young girl's imminent sexuality that mainstream Hollywood audiences had seen. In it a thirteen-year-old girl married to an older man spends memorable amounts of time in baby doll pajamas, lying in a crib-like bed. Although he makes good his promise not to consummate the marriage until her sixteenth birthday, she ultimately leaves him for another, more desirable man. When they are allowed to have sexual feelings, the film implied, children experience them in ways that challenge adult rules for behavior. More overtly, *Baby Doll* acknowledged what had only been hinted at before: that children and youth can be the object of adult, spectatorial desire.

With *Baby Doll*, however, dangerous, desirable Hollywood children also ceased being passive objects and claimed desire as a province of their own. *Peyton Place* (1957) and *A Summer Place* (1959) both made it clear that teenagers no longer abided by the rules for sexual behavior their parents had observed. *Blue Denim* (1959) frankly discussed teenage pregnancy and the possibility of abortion. However, chaste, some would say sexually repressed movie children still coexisted with their racier cinematic peers.

Pat Boone worked hard in school and never really kissed girls in films like *Bernadette* (1956), *April Love* (1957) and *Summer Love* (1958). *Tammy and the Bachelor* (1957) and *Gidget* (1959) represented teenaged girls as middle-class, white and virginal. But the wildly successful *Beach Party* (1963) returned to portrayals of teenagers as "sex-starved and mentally challenged." Advertising for the film proclaimed, "10 000 kids on 5 000 beach blankets! The inside story of what goes on when the sun's gone down . . . the moon's come

up . . . and the water's too cold for surfin'."[30] The world of *Beach Party* was one long summer without any interruptions in the fun of being young and hormonal. Parents did not exist for these teenagers, and the only professional in the film was a clueless professor who came disguised to the beach to gather data for his sex survey.

Despite reel teenagers' sexual preoccupation in *Beach Party* and its spin-offs, they appear less of a threat to the social order in them than they did in films of the fifties. Girls still wanted to marry the boys, after all, and were not interested in 'going all the way' until that was the case. Directly or indirectly, however, beach films also made it possible for off-screen adults to look with open desire at bikini bunnies and muscular young men whose appearance and behavior clearly marked them as 'available.' Traditional sexual contracts between movie-going adults and reel teenagers became increasingly complex.

In the late seventies audiences participated voyeuristically in a child's loss of virginity - (*Pretty Baby*, 1978). And *American Grafitti* (1973), *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Risky Business* (1983), *Little Darlings* (1980), *Sixteen Candles* (1984) and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986) all portrayed young people concerned with formerly adult sexual preoccupations, as well as with shallow and non-productive activity in general. The production of a completely American version of *Lolita* in 1998 epitomizes the legitimization of looking with desire on the desiring child.[31] *Happiness* (1998) even goes so far as to look with sympathetic eyes on a father who is also a pederast.

In this light it is interesting to examine a series of films in which the murder of teenagers was acted out repeatedly and with ritualistic overtones. In *Halloween* (1978) and the droves of 'slasher' films that came after it, young people are gutted and ripped apart for no immediately obvious reason.[32] Michael, the killer in *Halloween,* has just been released from a mental hospital

where he was incarcerated at the age of six for the slaying of his sister and her boyfriend. He had discovered them post-coitus.

His intention in returning to his hometown is the murder of a girl named Laurie, who he imagines to be his sister. Before he gets to Laurie, however, he kills Annie who is on her way to her boyfriend's house, Bob, who has just had sex with his girlfriend Lynda and gone to the kitchen to get a drink, and Lynda, who is still in bed, talking on the phone to Laurie and waiting for Bob, now dead, to return.

Michael is portrayed as psychopathic and totally evil, as are Leatherface and Chop Top in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and Freddie Krueger, the undead child molester in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984).[33] Since slasher films are filled with couples looking for some, usually, private place to copulate, the most apparent 'evil' shared by all the adolescents they dispatch is sexual activity. Those who go after 'wrong' sex, die.[34] The price for imitating adult behavior is apparently higher than reel kids of the fifties and sixties had imagined.

In the final decade of the century the fascination with slasher films continued. *Scream* (1996) presents the generic scenario in a way that is self-reflexive and self-parodying. Characters in the film are informed by the rules of slasher films themselves. "Never have sex, never drink or do drugs, and never say you'll be right back." The 'slashers' in the film, two boys who simply like cutting people and seeing their insides, share this wisdom at the end of the film: "Movies don't make psychos. They make psychos more creative."[35]

Scream was followed predictably by *Scream II* (1997); *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997); and *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer* (1998).

The 'final girl' of the original *Halloween*, now an adult whose life has been marked by her experience also relives her terror in *Halloween: H^2O* (1998).

It is difficult for me to understand the popularity this genre has enjoyed since the late seventies. That adolescents should exorcise other adolescents is an especially puzzling turn of events. Unfortunately it makes a Seventeenth Century kind of cinematic sense. If, as Hobbes believed, the physical containment and/or purging of evil in children by adults is essential and neglected at society's peril, and if as it seems, a Hobbesian view of children is very much alive in contemporary movies, carrying out that act in films is problematic. Since the fifties, adults have been increasingly excised from the lives of movie children. Who besides other kids is left to carry out that socially protective measure?

DANGEROUS CHILDREN: THE CHILD AS OUTLAW

> *What are you rebelling against?*
> *What d-ya got?*
>
> Marlon Brando, answering a girl's question in
> *The Wild One*, 1953

While the ultimate dangerous children were the juvenile delinquents of the fifties, as early as the late thirties, Hollywood showed audiences that children needed guidance and direction to keep from 'going bad.' Where Locke urged molding children to please God, however, films like *Dead End* (1937) urged molding children to protect society. An architect and a gangster, who had once been childhood friends in the slums of New York, struggled for ghettoized boys' souls in this film. The architect had turned out well and encouraged them to get an education. The gangster, Babyface Martin, offered living proof of what boys could become if changes were not made in their environment.

Dead End's success was followed by *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), *Boys Town* (1938), *They Made Me A Criminal* (1939), and *One Third of A Nation* (1939).[36] Like their silent predecessors, these films used images of children to point out social problems – in this case the evils of slum living.

In the fifties, American motion pictures underwent many changes related to competition from television. The search for new audiences began and one of these audiences was made up of teenagers.[37] Movie moguls determined that these young people wanted to see more violence in films. Relaxed production codes made that possible, so, rising out of the decline of the Hollywood studio system and the ascendancy of the privileged American teenager, the 'teenpic' was born.[38]

Films of the fifties presented images of children audiences had never seen before. Suspicion and fear replaced Victorian sentiment. Interest in the very young was replaced by a preoccupation with the teenager. While some films still presented children of this transitional period as the obedient offspring parents knew and loved, teenpics were much more interested in adolescents who were in some way out of control.[39]

'Soft' juvenile delinquent films were Freudian, seeing the child as a possible problem in the future. 'Hard' juvenile delinquent films were "Hobbesian melodramas" that blamed the delinquent for his anti-social behavior but at the same time relished the energy his attitude generated.[40] Soft films, it was said, looked for cures to the juvenile condition. Hard films looked for cages to put juveniles in.

Rebel without a Cause (1955) depicted adolescents as no longer docilely passing through a painful initiation into adulthood, but angrily demanding attention and the right to self-determination. James Dean, in the film's starring

role was, in fact, the first film teenager.[41] As Jim Stark he is angry with his parents, who are ineffectual and fail to help him find direction in his life, although he is perhaps better off than his friend Plato, whose parents are inexplicably absent from the film's narrative and who lives with the family maid.[42] Both adolescents are angry at society in general.

Jim finds it necessary to stand up to Buzz, the leader of a gang of juvenile delinquents at his school and becomes involved in a 'chicken run,' the kind of drag race that became the focus of many other teenpic spin-offs.[43] "Why do we do this?" Jim asks before the race in which Buzz dies. Buzz replies, "You gotta do something, doncha'?"[44] Locke warned that if adults did not fill the void within the child with godliness, something or someone else would. In *Rebel without a Cause*, teenagers fill their own emptiness with violence and even death.

Later in the film Jim, Plato and Jim's girlfriend Judy go to the planetarium. There they sit alone and alienated in the darkness of the amphitheater, while a planetarium interpreter in an empty and clinical voice speaks about the vastness of infinity. The metaphor communicates the insecurity and isolation of the young people's adolescent state.

As a soft juvenile delinquent film, *Rebel without A Cause* attributes Jim's alienation, in good Freudian fashion, to the failure of his parents and also to personal, psychological causes. Jim can be cured if he receives professional help.[45] However, *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) implied in the same year that something besides weak parents in affluent families was pushing young people toward violence.[46]

In that film, a teacher, Mr. Dadier, appears to reach some of the students he teaches in a racially mixed ghetto high school with cliches about justice,

democracy and the American dream. Actually he reasserts the old paradigm of adult authority through superior force after students attempt to rape one of the female teachers at the school, and carry out other acts of violence.

As a hard juvenile delinquent film, *Blackboard Jungle* ultimately blames teenagers for their behavior, suggesting incarceration as the best cure. It presents a truly frightening view of youth, but not because of teenage swaggering and vengeful behavior. *Blackboard Jungle* is frightening because it represents a breakdown in the old contract between age and youth. Bereft of anything to strike out at, young people in *Blackboard Jungle* rebel against the crumbling edifices of old paradigms.[47]

Whether the energy of teenagers broke out as violence or as sexuality, the response of movie adults was anger and fear. Parents were ineffective in dealing with their children's rebelliousness. Professionals promised help but rarely delivered it. Fifties reel kids had become problems that reel adults did not have the knowledge – perhaps even the will – to solve.

Images of violent adolescents persisted in the sixties in *Up the Down Staircase* (1967), *Halls of Anger* (1969) and *Wild in the Streets* (1968). The latter was by far the most outrageous of the three. In that film an alienated teenager grows up to be a millionaire rock star. At twenty-two he becomes president, proclaims mandatory retirement for everyone over thirty, and forces all citizens over thirty-five to life sentences in prison camps and daily doses of LSD.

Seventies and eighties films paid less attention to teenagers' capacities for violence, but the now infamous *Basketball Diaries* (1995) again presented viewers with images of angry adolescents. In that film a drug-addicted teen in

a trench coat goes on a rampage, spraying the halls of his school with bullets.[48]

The more mainstream *Sleepers* (1996) also revisited the notion that children can be dangerous. In this updated version of *Dead End*, four boys from New York's Hell's Kitchen are imprisoned for a youthful prank that ended in the death of a concession stand attendant. While in prison they are repeatedly sexually abused by the prison guards. One of these boys grows up and becomes a lawyer, one a reporter and two become criminals. Eventually the two criminals kill the guard who persecuted them and the lawyer and reporter become part of an illegal scheme to keep their former friends from going to prison. As in juvenile delinquent films the most dangerous things children can do, it seems, is reach puberty and grow up.

DANGEROUS CHILDREN: THE CHILD AS DEMON OR MONSTER

You have Satin's power!
It's not Satan's power. It's me.
When I concentrate I can move things.
Carrie to her mother in
Carrie (1976)

If movie kids were suspected of posing threats to the social order prior to the fifties, teen-agers during that decade were openly portrayed as monsters. In *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* (1957) Tony Rivers is a troubled adolescent whose widowed father is well meaning but always at work.[49] When Tony starts fighting he seeks out the help of a psychiatrist, Alfred Brandon. Dr. Brandon believes that mankind is doomed and that the only hope for survival is regression back to its primitive state. The doctor feels that Tony is the perfect subject for such regression.

Through drugs and hypnosis Brandon returns Tony to a time when he was a werewolf. Once Tony realizes he is responsible for several grizzly murders, he again seeks out the doctor's help. However, Brandon chooses to regress Tony further and film his metamorphosis. In his werewolf state, Tony kills the doctor and is then caught and killed by the police.[50]

This seems a laughable plot, and yet it has implications as dark as *Rebel without A Cause* or *Blackboard Jungle*. Given the absence of parents in both these films, the protagonists have been told to reach out to a professional for help. Tony cannot turn to his absent father so he turns to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist betrays Tony's trust in the pursuit of his own interests. Tony's suffering is trivialized in the film, and his ultimate destruction is made to seem justified.[51]

It is apparent in watching these teen monster films now that the 'dangerous' cinematic children of the fifties were up against betrayal on a far grander scale than they themselves practiced. While the films attempted to portray them as monstrous or evil, they ultimately appeared more vulnerable than those they were attempting to menace. Innocence, or what passed for it in fifties films seems to have been rediscovered, if momentarily, in these monstrous cinematic juveniles.

The demonizing of movie adolescents continued in the seventies with the ultimate film about the alienated and demonic adolescent: *Carrie* (1976). Carrie's peers ridicule her for her oddness and outsider status. Her mother is alarmed by her daughter's minor shows of telekinesis. "You have Satin's power!" she tells Carrie.
"It's not Satan's power," Carrie replies. "It's me. When I concentrate I can move things."

Carrie accepts an invitation to a school dance where some of her peers set out to play a prank on her. Moments before she is crowned prom queen, they pour buckets of rotten pig's blood over Carrie's head. Her rage releases the full extent of her power. She incinerates the school gym and immolates most of her so-called friends, her "sparkle," as Robert Cleaver predicted over three hundred years earlier, "raging over and burning down the whole house." When Carrie returns home, her mother stabs her, convinced her daughter is a witch. Before she dies, Carries uses her power to stop the beating of her mother's heart.

Carrie's telekinetic power ties her to Hobbes' child of evil. But because the supernatural and the psychosexual intersect in the film, she is also a child of Freud.[52] She is therefore doubly dangerous. It should not come as a surprise that the narrative of the film dispenses with her as violently as it does. Yet we could argue that *Carrie* is a child destroyed not because of innate evil, but because of her inability to fit into her family or school culture.
Stephen King says of the character he created: "Carrie White is a sadly misused teenager, broken for good in that pit . . . that is your normal, suburban high school."[53] None of this speculation disputes the Seventeenth Century position, however, that children have the potential to go 'bad' when they are not controlled.

Whatever view we take of Carrie, other films earlier in the decade presented a very strong view of children as the devil's portal.[54] The most infamous of these was *The Exorcist* (1973). In that film a young girl, Regan, is possessed by the devil.[55] Regan's mother calls the family priest, also a psychiatrist, because she cannot cope with her fatherless daughter and the medical profession has also failed to do so.[56] Unlike the doctor in *I Was A Teenage Werewolf*, Father Karras does recognize Regan's danger, as does Father Merrin, his associate. In fact Father Merrin takes the demon into himself to

save Regan, making him one of the rare adults who acts effectively for the sake of children in films of the decade.[57]

Several films in the nineties played on this special relationship between children and occult forces. The protagonist in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1992), while human herself, has some special connection to the vampires she constantly destroys with the grace and energy of a high school cheerleader. Young children in *A Little Princess* (1995) and *Matilda* (1996) are attracted to magic and in the latter film, have magical powers themselves.

In *The Craft* (1996) four girls form a coven as a way of protecting themselves against the hell that is their high school world.[58] Each girl struggles against some form of persecution. Bonnie was burned as a child and has painful scars on her back. Rochelle is a black child in a racist, all-white school. Nancy comes from a poor background and is socially ostracized. And Sarah has such intense emotional problems that she has attempted suicide.

The girls' early attempts at white magic are benign but ultimately everyone but Sarah becomes vengeful and destructive. One reviewer read the power these girls were releasing as rage rather than magic and wrote, "the emotions set loose in high school are of the most fierce variety, even though they're just kids in school."[59] Once again we are reminded of the "sparkle" within a young person that must be contained. Regarding that sparkle as positive energy and attempting to enhance it is a feat rarely attempted in Hollywood film.

CHILDREN AS SEARCHERS

Shane! Come back, Shane!

Joey to Shane
Shane (1953)

Pre-fifties movie children often longed for lost or endangered parents, family members or pets. (*Little Annie Rooney*, 1925; *The Champ*, 1931; *Little Miss Marker*, 1934; *The Little Princess*, 1939; *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, 1945). Reel kids began a deeper and more painful search in the fifties, an era generally characterized by cinematic rebellion. Mentorship or unconditional love and acceptance (*Shane*, 1953; *Member of the Wedding*, 1952;), vengeance, justice or merely meaning in the midst of betrayal (*The Red Badge of Courage*, 1951; *East of Eden*, 1955; *Rebel without a Cause*, 1955; *Old Yeller*, 1957;): all became cinematic preoccupations for fifties movie youth.

The narrative of *Rebel Without a Cause* presents us with a young man - Jim Stark –whose rebellion seems to be the result of something more than his own evil nature, no matter what the title implies. His search was carried on in the sixties by young people increasingly disillusioned with the world of adults. These searching youth were loners who no longer saw society as having anything to offer them.

Lon Bannon, the teenager in *Hud* (1963) ultimately realizes that his uncle Hud is not the ideal figure he believed him to be. Realizing Hud cannot change, Lon walks away in complete disillusionment. "I guess now you're of the opinion that I'm not fit to live with," Hud says. "That's too bad. We might have whooped it up together some. You used to want that."
"I used to," Lon says. "So long, Hud."

An alienated teenaged girl named Mick imagines, in *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter* (1968), that she has found a sympathetic companion in the deaf-mute, John Singer.[60] All the while she feels she is being understood, however, the audience, having access to Singer's thoughts, knows what she ultimately learns: that in his silence he fanaticizes her to be someone else. She attempts to alleviate her loneliness through a sexual encounter with a boy her own age, and is, again, disappointed. Her search ends in bitterness.

When John Locke warned that children must be taught to be morally acceptable, he probably did not envision a world where characters like Rooster Cogburn would become figures of pedagogical influence. In *True Grit* (1969) the young girl, Mattie, searches for her father's killer. Unable to carry out her quest, she hires the amoral Cogburn to find her father's killer. She travels along with him and in the process becomes as morally marginal a character as he is. She demonstrates her worth at the end of the film by firing a few bullets from his gun into the dead body of her father's killer, something the 'good' characters in westerns would not have done fifteen years earlier.

Films of the early seventies present images of young people who are too alienated and disempowered to search for anything, and live in a world where there is nothing worth searching for. *The Last Picture Show* (1971) depicts its teenage protagonists as unable to leave their adolescence behind and enter the world of adults. Like the dust in their little Texas town, even that illusion has blown away.

When *Star Wars* exploded on the screen in 1977, the result was a re-energized image of the searching or questing youth. Luke Skywalker searches against galactic odds first for a mentor, Obi Wan Kanobe, killed by the evil Darth Vader, and eventually for his father. At all times the Force is with him and sustains him in the trials of this search as well as in the shock of

his realization that Darth Vader is the father he once loved and looked up to. Luke may be disappointed in his ultimate search for his father, but he does find mentorship from other sources, just as *The Karate Kid* (1984) learns to control his destiny through the discipline of karate and the mentorship of the Japanese handyman in his apartment house.[61]

Despite the return of these films to the notion of youth-as-heroic quester, however, movie youth in the eighties continued to feel disenfranchised. In *Ordinary People* (1980) a young man struggles to cope with guilt over his inability to save his brother from drowning. He feels he should have died instead – a sentiment his mother reinforces by her cold indifference to him. A psychiatrist, acting in good Freudian fashion helps the boy to view his brother's death in a different light, thus proving that the past (and the child), are indeed keys to the present.

Other youth such as the high school students in *The Breakfast Club* (1985) attempt to find meaning together in a world where yuppie parents have no time for or interest in their children. Jim Stark, an apparently causeless rebel, cried out to his parents in frustration, "Leave me alone! You're tearing me apart!" A comparable cry of eighties movie children and youth might well be, "Come back! You're leaving me alone!"[62]

Do parents come back in the nineties? Unfortunately, they do not, although the parents who went to summer camp to escape their children in *The Day My Parents Ran Away* (1993) are an extreme example. Hollywood has consistently offered us images of adults who influence children negatively.[63] But in films like *A Perfect World* (1993) and *A Little Princess* (1995), adults are not so much negative in their influence as they are ambivalent and non-normative.

This is not to say that cinematic adults who care about children no longer exist. In *Foxfire (1996)*, *The Craft* (1996), *Scream (1990)*, *A Little Princess (1995)* and *Harriet the Spy (1996)*, parents obviously do care about their children. They simply are not narratively or cinematically allowed to be important in their lives.

In the opening moments of *Scream*, for example, a young girl is slashed to death while she holds a portable phone in her hand. Her mother comes into the house, picks up the phone and hears her daughter's death screams, but doesn't know where she is. To call this mother useless is unfair. Rather she is not allowed to be of use.

Fly Away Home (*1996*) seems a rare exception among films at the close of this decade. In it a young girl's mother dies and the girl is returned to her father, who is an artist. At first they have no rapport at all. But he sees how passionately she cares about the Canada Geese goslings she has found and becomes involved in helping her realize her dream of helping the geese fly south for the winter. In this way he plays a truly pedagogical role in his daughter's life, assisting her in reaching her dreams without taking them away or taking them over himself. Increasingly, however, film children bond with animals, or with each other, more than they search successfully for adults who love them.

THE RACIAL CHILD

"I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' babies."
Butterfly McQueen in *Gone with the Wind* (1938)

The generic movie child was initially white. When films such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927) or *Topsy and Eva* (1928) needed an actress to play the black girl, Topsy, a white woman in black face was cast in the role.[64] And if black children appeared in films they were stereotyped. Alfalfa in the 'Our Gang' series (1922-1929), is an example. In *The Littlest Rebel* (1936), Shirley Temple, as a white child, is cleverer and more resourceful than black children who are much older than she is. As the simple-minded, black servant in *Gone with the Wind* (1938), Butterfly McQueen knows nothing about delivering babies or anything else and must occasionally be slapped into sensibility.

The few images of black children audiences saw in the forties continued to be stereotyped. In *Song of the South* (1947) they still appeared simple-minded and happy to be living on the plantation. In *Centennial Summer* (1946) they appeared happy to be singing and dancing and living anywhere at all. Then in 1955, a young, black man named Gregory D. Miller riveted audiences in *Blackboard Jungle*. Played by Sidney Poitier, Miller was a student at a tough, New York high school, and an arrogant loner. Intelligent and charismatic, he was also black. The image of one young person with all these characteristics was new to mainstream Hollywood film. *Blackboard Jungle's* hard-edged world became fashionable and was recreated in many other action-oriented, gritty movies.[65] If children appeared in these films, however, they did so only as part of the *mise-en-scène*.

In the sixties *Westside Story* (1961) presented images of children as other-than-white, as did *Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1961). It was not until the seventies, however, that audiences readily saw images of

non-white children. Sometimes they were rebellious and dangerous, (*Halls of Anger*, 1970; *The Education of Sonny Carson*, 1974). But sometimes they lived non-stereotypical lives within caring families (*Sounder*, 1974; *Claudine*, 1974), and overcame educational obstacles (*Conrak*, 1974). If stereotypes of non-white children persisted, they paralleled stereotypes of white children. *Cooley High* (1975) is a black replication of *American Grafitti's* white nostalgia (1973), *Aaron Loves Angela* (1975) is a black version of Romeo and Juliet, and *Abby* (1973) is a black version of *The Exorcist* (1973).

Although they generally do not appear in 'lead' roles, non-white children appear in mainstream eighties and nineties films more than they have at any other time during this century. However, in considering the stereotyping of black children, and children of other races, it becomes clear that Hollywood has tended to stereotype all children, no matter what their ethnic or racial identity. In general, images of children have served Hollywood masters as much as Topsy served hers in 1927.

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Against the panoply of childhood images Hollywood has presented to audiences during this century, some are strongly recurrent. Sentimentalized views of children have persisted, carrying a generic version of Rousseau's innocent, natural child to ridiculous lengths. Children are good, movies tell us, and not only when they are very young. They can be relied on to rescue adults from the messes they have made of their own lives. And they can arrive at this state of goodness with very little outside help. That is fortunate because adults have been curiously absent from Hollywood narratives in any real and meaningful way since the fifties.

Hollywood films have been increasingly willing to demonstrate that the apparently innate power of these good and natural children also has

subversive potential. Children who can act independently of adult wishes are children who may become threats to the social order. Children who are innocent and empty of world-knowledge are children, Locke reminded us, who are waiting to be filled. Frequently in movies the 'filling' has been made up of demonic possession or sexual preoccupation, if not obsession.

A great deal has been expected of reel kids it seems: traveling thorough time to rescue and forgive parents or relatives; setting aside personal needs – even childhood itself - in favor of societal or familial ones. For such service they might expect gratitude, if not canonization. Instead, at the close of the century, Hollywood movie children are both eulogized and brutalized before our eyes. A montage composed of these conflicting images lacks rational clarity of any kind.

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[1] In fact, the use of the word 'innocent' at all in terms of children is currently somewhat suspect. To that extent its use in this study is generally problematized. In describing the relationship of children and adults, however, and in describing my own personal position toward that issue, I will state that I am quite comfortable with the use of the term 'innocence' to describe a young child's openness and lack of experience with the world. It is a factor in pedagogical relationships. As Houdini said to his audience in *Fairytale* (1997): "Gentlemen! Never try to fool children. They expect nothing and therefore see everything."

[2] Sloan (1988), pp. 4, 20, 45 and 82. Socially focussed, early American filmmakers saw the medium as being able to entertain and instruct at the same time. The ability of these films to vilify those in power while also justifying their use of power and softening its impact for working-class audiences is interestingly presented in Sloan's book.

[3] Ibid., p. 88-96. These films were produced by Margaret Sanger herself, whose efforts to make birth control accessible to women were both publicly celebrated and vilified.

[4] Maltby (1995), p. 44.

[5] Capra (1971), pp. 37-39.

[6] Cook (1996), p. 27.

[7] Ibid., p. 62. See also Kinsella (1977), p. 49. In his short story "The McGuffin," Kinsella's native protagonist, Silas Erminskin learns from his creative writing teacher that "Mr. Hitchcock say a McGuffin is the thing everybody get all hot and bothered about, like a diamond that been stolen or some secret papers that been lost."

[8] Slide (1980), p. 71-76.

[9] Goldstein (1980), p. xiv.

[10] Edwards (1988), pp. 265-392. Deanna Durbin portrayed the same function in films like *100 Men and a Girl* (1937), where she formed unemployed musicians into an orchestra and played for Leopold Stowkowsky

[11] Nadel (1997), p. 158.

[12] *The Biscuit Eater* (1940); *My Friend Flicka* (1943); *National Velvet* (1943); *Black Beauty* (1946); *The Courage of Lassie* (1946); *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* (1948) and *So Dear to My Heart* (1949) are only a few films of this type.

[13] Sequels to the film, *The Bad News Bears in Breaking Training* (1977) and *The Bad News Bears Go to Japan* (1978) continued to explore the theme, but less engagingly.

[14] Palmer (1995), p. 14.

[15] Quart (1990), pp. 145-146.

[16] Palmer (1995), p. 13. *Back to the Future* is one of many films of this decade in which time travelers, although not always children, found the answers to present problems in the past. *The Terminator* (1984); *Star Trek IV* (1986); and *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986) are other examples.

[17] Nadel (1996), p. 77.

[18] The use of the word "baby" or "babe" in Hollywood film does not necessarily connote the obvious. In 25 film titles containing the word baby listed in Leonard Maltin's *1998 Movie and Video guide*, only ten denoted movies about human infants. The other fifteen referred to baby animals such as pigs, dinosaurs or leopards, gangsters or sexy females. A rash of films about human babies therefore seems significant.

[19] This is a remake of *Angels in the Outfield* (1951). The only change is that it was a young girl who saw the angels playing in the fifties outfield. In the 1994 movie, two boys in foster care have that computer-enhanced vision.

[20] See Chapter Four for further discussion of this film.

[21] There are two sequels to this film: *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992); and *Home Alone III* (1997). In addition several clones were made. Among them *Blank Check* (1994) and *Baby's Day Out* (1994).

[22] The burglars and parents in *Home Alone* are no more witless, however, than the father who shrunk his kinds in *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989) or blew up the baby in *Honey, I Blew Up the Kid* (1992).

[23] Nadel (1997), pp. 160-161. Nadel describes Kevin as "a subject of consumer culture." When he buys a toothbrush he asks the druggist if the American Dental Association endorses the brand – a concern likely taught by television commercials and not his parents.

[24] Walker (1970), p. 43. Walker describes Pickford as possessing the same image of " that perpetual girlhood which is so persistent, at times even sinister a strain in Victorian popular sentiment."

[25] Black (1988), pp. 118-119, and photo insets.

[26] Edwards (1988) p. 363. Greene wrote this in his column for *Night and Day* on October 28, 1937. Its occasion was the release of Temple's film, *Wee Willie Winkie*. Temple was nine years old at that time.

[27] Goldstein (1980), p. 8. In *The Bachelor and The Bobby-Soxer* (1947), Temple played a young girl who fell in love with Cary Grant. She was still sweet, but nobody seemed to care.

[28] See Rooney (1991), pp. 345-349. Additional films were: *Judge Hardy's Children* (1938), *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (1938), *Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever* (1939), *Andy Hardy Meets* the *Debutante* (1940) and *Andy Hardy's Private Secretary* (1941).

[29] Quart (1991), p. 38.

[30] McGee (1996), pp. 220-235. *Beach Party* was followed by *Bikini Beach* (1964), *Muscle Beach* (1964), *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965), *The Ghost in the Invisible Bikini* (1965) and a number of other spin-offs.

[31] The first movie based on Nabakov's novel was filmed in Britain in 1962. Although American money produced the film, censorship codes in the United States at that time made it too risky a venture to film there.

[32] Quart (1991), p. 78. Slasher films are considered to be descendants of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Although there was little direct violence in that film, the slashing death of Janet Leigh in the privacy of her shower was an invasion of domestic privacy unlike anything audiences had ever seen up to that time. No space was inviolable after *Psycho*, even for moviegoers.

[33] Clover (1992), p. 29. The notable exception to the chain of young, male murderers in these slasher films takes place in *Friday the Thirteenth I* (1980) where the killer is a middle-aged mother whose son drowned years earlier due to the negligence of summer camp counselors. In sequels to *Friday the Thirteenth*, the killer is again youthful and male.

[34] Ibid., pp. 33 and 51. The one survivor the genre allows – almost always a girl – is less strongly coded female than the girls who die. This "final girl," as Clover calls her, is slim, virginal [or at least sexually inactive in the film], intelligent and a good problem solver. Instead of screaming, she goes into action. Clover suggests that the final girl doubles for an adolescent male, allowing the young, male majority audience to identify more readily with her ambiguous physical and behavioral coding.

[35] Visit http://movie-reviews.colussus.net/movies/s/scream.html.

[36] Roffman (1981), p. 144-145. Toward the end of the thirties the popularity of these films dropped off, and increasingly sentimental or comic versions of their encounters were produced, such as *Little Tough Guys* (1938), *Little Tough Guys in Society* (1938) and *Angels Wash Their Faces* (1939). In the forties and fifties remnants of the "Dead End Kids" were renamed "The Bowry Boys" and went on to make a succession of purely comedic films such as *The Bowry Boys Meet the Monsters* (1954).

[37] Doherty (1988), p. 153. This marketing discovery, "The Peter Pan Principle," states that younger children will watch what older children will, but older children won't do the reverse. Girls will watch what boys will watch, but boys won't do the reverse. Targeting a nineteen-year-old male viewer encompasses everyone.

[38] Ibid., pp. 1-14 and 111. Stock elements of these films were juke joint hangouts, jive talk, and displacement of parents by friendly and unthreatening surrogate authorities.

[39] The use of the two terms together is interesting. There is nothing particularly delinquent or suspect in being juvenile, yet the term implies there is. As Shirley Temple was suspected of wearing childhood innocence as a mask, the delinquent, who is bound to be guilty of something, wears juvenility as a protection.

[40] Doherty (1988), pp. 124-129.

[41] Ibid., p. 106.

[42] Quart (1991), pp. 60-61.

[43] A list of some of these films includes *Hot Cars* (1956), *Hot Rod Girl* (1956), *Motorcycle Gang* (1957), *Drag Strip Girl* (1957), *Devil's Hairpin* (1957), and *Dragstrip Riot* (1958).

[44] Doherty (1988), p. 107.

[45] Helping professionals became common in fifties films, and were usually portrayed as more effective than parents. They represent a belief in the "talking cure" as a way of ridding the child of his own personal demon. In one film, *The Young Stranger* (1957) a policeman lectures a young boy's father about his negative attitude. That caused the father to support, rather than reject, his son, as he formerly had done.

[46] Doherty (1988), pp. 74-76. *Blackboard Jungle*, too, inspired spin-offs: *Running Wild* (1955),*Teenage Crime Wave* (1955), *Crime in the Streets* (1956), *The Delinquents* (1957), *Rock All Night* (1957), *Juvenile Jungle* (1958), *Dangerous Youth* (1958), and *Young and Wild* (1958).

[47] Ibid., p. 108. In *The Wild One* (1953) Marlon Brando belongs to a motorcycle gang. A town girl asks, "So what are you rebelling about?" Brando replies, "What d'ya got?"

[48] *Basketball Diaries* was held responsible by many people for inspiring the 1999 massacre in Littleton, Colorado of over fifteen young people by two adolescents dressed very much like Leonardo DiCaprio in the film. The relationship of reel to real is probably not that simplistic. However, it does deserve serious attention. See the Coda of this study.

[49] Many films followed in the wake of this one: *Blood of Dracula* (1957), *Teenage Zombies* (1957), *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1958), *Teenage Monster* (1958), *Teenagers from Outer Space* (1959) and *I Was A Teenage Caveman* (1959). Even Walt Disney created a film about a boy who became a dog, *The Shaggy Dog*, (1959).

[50] McGee (1996), p. 87.

[51] Skal (1993), p. 256. Herman Cohen, the producer of *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* defended the film's treatment of Tony as a public service, quoting the alleged statement of a California psychiatrist that horror movies were "self-administered psychiatric therapy for America's adolescents."

[52] Clover (1992), pp. 66, 71.

[53] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[54] Women are also treated in the same capacity, so female children are doubly vulnerable.

[55] We never learn in the film why Regan has been chosen as a site of possession. *The Omen* (1976) is far clearer about the selection of the adopted boy, Damien. His mother is the devil's portal, in this case. He carries on her work as Satan's emissary in that film and in *Damien: Omen II* (1978). Being young, human and alive seems to be the cause of evil in both Regan and Damien's cases.

[56] Skal (1993), pp. 293-294. Skal argues that despite the film's shocking content, at heart it is still another film about a single mother who can't cope with her teenage daughter. See also Lange (1989), p. 21. Lange points out that a single mother seeking help for her child, and the attempt by priests as father-substitutes to re-establish the family unit and therefore, uphold the social order make the film as much a melodrama as a film about horror or the occult.

[57] The demon comes back, of course, in *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977), and *Exorcist III* (1990).

[58] The review of this film carried in the San Francisco Chronicle on Friday, May 3, 1996 carried the headline, "High School Is Really Hell."

[59] Ibid.

[60] Goldstein (1980), pp. 303-304.

[61] *The Karate Kid, Part II* was released in 1986 and *The Karate Kid, Part III* in 1989.

[62] Doherty (1988), p. 237. Doherty identifies this as the plea of kids who have nothing left, even to rebel against. Exceptions to his interesting observation are children in *The War of the Roses*, (1989), whose parents use them as collateral in their divorce suit.

[63] For example, *The Kid* (1924), *Dead End* (1937), *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939), *Intruder in the Dust* (1949), *Hud* (1963), *Paper Moon* (1973), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and *Matilda* (1996).

[64] Pines (1975), p. 11.

[65] Parish (1989), p. 56. These movies are generally called 'blaxploitation' films.

Chapter Three

AN "INNOCENT" CHILD: *THE LITTLE PRINCESS* (1939)

Oh, Daddy. I am thinking of you and I know you are thinking of me.

Sara closes her eyes and imagines her father is present on her birthday, even though he is away at war. The curtains billow as if in response.

Hollywood has frequently presented us with images of children as dangerous, and forces that are demonic or sexual have often possessed them. However, it is to the innocent, sacrificing and rescuing child that the American movie industry has returned again and again throughout the Twentieth Century. It seems important to question whether those representations have changed during that time. As viewers do we observe the same qualities of 'innocence' in *The Kid* (1924), as we do in *Little Miss Marker* (1934), or *E.T.* (1982), or *Simon Birch* (1998)? More importantly how have different cinematic approaches to film children contributed to changes in our perceptions of them?

We can begin that inquiry by contemplating the cinematic experience of two young girls living out the same narrative in two different films, one produced just prior to World War II, *The Little Princess* (1939), and the other produced in the mid-nineties, *A Little Princess* (1995). Shirley Temple starred in the first of these films. It was her first Technicolor production for Twentieth Century Fox.

The narrative of the movie focuses on motherless Sara Crewe, who has lived all ten years of her life with her father in India. When his regiment goes to South Africa to fight in the Boer War, he takes her to London to attend an exclusive girls' school – *Miss Minchin's Seminary*. After an indeterminate period of time Captain Crewe is reported missing in action. Since his wealth is

tied up in South African commodities, 'the enemy' confiscates it and Sara is left a pauper, unable to pay her school bills.

Miss Minchin keeps her on as a servant girl, but in so doing causes her to live under potentially harmful conditions, both physically and spiritually. Sara never gives up hope that her father is alive however, and searches continually for him in the wards of a London hospital where war casualties are tended. Happily she finds him eventually and although he has lost his memory, she causes him to remember. The film ends with their reunion.

PRESUMING THE CHILD INNOCENT

The Little Princess opens with a montage of British landmarks and symbols: London Bridge, the Tower of London, Windsor Castle, a portrait of Queen Victoria, and then moves quickly to shots of parading British soldiers juxtaposed with a newspaper head-line announcing: *War! Regiments Depart for Transvaal*! After an establishing shot of a carriage moving along a busy London street, an interior shot shows Sara and Captain Crewe in medium close-up, sitting inside what we assume to be the same carriage. She wears an ermine-trimmed cape and bonnet. Her hair is short and curly, but controlled, her face full and round. He is distinguished in an officer's uniform. They look very much at home in London's royal landscape, despite the fact that they have just arrived from India where Sara has lived as long as she can remember.

After a second establishing shot again shows the carriage moving along in traffic a subsequent medium close-up of Sara and her father takes us inside the carriage again. Sara asks Captain Crewe why there are so many soldiers, if, as he has implied, it is only "a little war." He answers that many soldiers are necessary to make "those stubborn Boers take notice." Sara tells him she will

miss him and he responds, "I'll be back before you can say knife." This seems an odd expression of reassurance, and Sara, who is eminently practical, doesn't appear to think much of it.
"I can say knife a good many times in a year," she pouts with impeccable logic.

Graham Greene described this characteristic Shirley Temple expression as *provocative*, although *indulged* seems a more appropriate word. Sara is a little girl who appears accustomed to having her opinions listened to by her adoring father. If that's the case she must have something worthwhile to say, at least from his perspective.

Hers is the soft, round face of a child. Her lips are more likely to pucker in petulance than in provocation. Have we something to fear from her? Is she wearing childhood as a mask, as Greene implied in his 1937 column? I prefer not to look at her in that way. Given the historical alternatives of innocence or harmfulness, I prefer to assume that this Sara Crewe who rides confidently beside her father in a hired carriage is truly lacking in evil intent or the potential to do harm, as the word innocent implies. I find that point of view more pedagogically acceptable.

And I am also aware that it is not her father who looks at her so directly. Rather than facing her oppositionally, he turns slightly toward her in three-quarter profile, regarding her as much with his presence as with his gaze. It is we as viewers who look intently at this young girl. That is the whole basis of our relationship. Whatever stance we take in interpreting her childish expression remains our responsibility, and should not be transferred to her.

Our first visual impressions of Sara, her relaxed posture next to her father, the brightness of her countenance and the alertness of her conversation, indicate she is a happy and confident child, securely placed in her father's esteem, as

well as in the wider world. Our own possible projections aside, everything about the cinematography of the film bears this first impression out.

DOMESTICATING CINEMATIC SPACE

When Sara and Captain Crewe arrive at the school, Miss Minchin and her brother Hubert are standing outside, arguing with a tradesman who has tried to deliver Sara's pony through the front door. There is no establishing shot of the school, or of the neighborhood it is located in. We see only a close up of a brass plate bearing the inscription, *Miss Minchin's Seminary* and under it the date, *1888*. In fact, all the shots outside the school focus on people: Sara and her father royally dressed, Miss Minchin in black with her hair pulled tightly back from her face and her expression radiating disapproval, her brother comically severe by her side.

Miss Minchin is not expecting Sara or her father, she says. If Captain Crewe sent her any letter she did not receive it. She fears their trip has been in vain - she never allows girls into her school without interviewing them first. At any rate, she has no rooms available. Miss Minchin does allow Sara and her father to come inside the school, but she appears to do so primarily out of concern over the effect of public argument on her school's good name.

Inside the school, the camera takes us immediately, and without an establishing shot, into Miss Minchin's office, where her attitude softens as she learns of Captain Crewe's wealth and social position. Again the camera focuses in medium close-up on the four people involved in the interview. Sara stands beside and slightly behind her seated father. His arm is around her waist, holding her close, while she rests a proprietary hand on his shoulder.

Throughout this portion of the film she regards Miss Minchin with an appraising and confident eye. There seems to be no tension or hostility between them – only Sara's need to make sense of things, and her confident belief she can. This is a privilege her father has encouraged her to take and one the socially conscious head mistress seems to regard as appropriate.

When Miss Minchin suddenly remembers that she does have a fine room that is vacant, Sara questions: "I thought you had no room free."
"That was before I knew what a dear little girl you were," Miss Minchin replies. Captain Crewe nods and smiles. He has already confessed to Miss Minchin that he can't imagine a school that would not want his "dear, little Sara" as a student.

Sara, on the other hand, is not so easily taken in. She turns to her father. "What does being a dear little girl have to do with extra rooms?" she whispers, once again displaying her ability to see through adults who say things that are hypocritical or simply not logical. Her father puts his finger to his lips, apparently not aware of the perceptiveness of her questions, and takes her hand. They follow as Miss Minchin leads them into Sara's new room.

Miss Minchin, Captain Crewe and Sara approach and enter her new room without a prior establishing shot. Nor are there any ceiling or long shots as the three people stand in the room and talk. Throughout the film, in fact, the space allocated for each frame is determined by the height of the tallest person in the shot. When Captain Crewe is present, for example, his head defines the top of the frame, while in shots focussing on Miss Minchin and Sara, Miss Minchin fulfills that function. It is likely that there were no ceilings used on the sets in this film, making it impractical to shoot over the tallest person's head. The resultant cinematic stance may therefore not be entirely intentional.

Still, the effect on the *mise-en-scène* of this approach to framing is that it becomes strongly character oriented. This influences the way I, at least, read the film.[1] I do not look at Sara's size in comparison to the rooms she inhabits or the streets she walks. I look at her size in relationship to other people. The camera shows us that Sara is small in comparison to adults. In some standing scenes with her father or Miss Minchin's brother, her head may be at the bottom of the screen while theirs is at the top.

What the camera doesn't show us, however, is that Sara is small in comparison to or intimidated by her surroundings. Other than looking at taller adults in the film, she gazes upward only once, when she prays that God will end the siege of Mafeking. Immediately crowds gather out in the street shouting that Mafeking has, indeed, been relieved. Clearly this is a movie child who lives in a protected, peopled and manageable world, where the *mise-en-scène* arranges for her prayers to be heard and answered – promptly.

Inside the Pedagogical Circle

An Orientation to the Future

Even after she learns of her father's disappearance and her world seems to crash around her, Sara's belief that she can find him ultimately manifests itself in his rescue from the amnesia that overcomes him in the war. When I consider what causes Sara's amazing resilience, it becomes clear to me that she draws strength from the support of adults who enter into pedagogical relationship with her.

Their entry into this relationship arises out of a pre-thoughtful state but is still thoughtful in the moment, a response to Sara's vulnerability and need. It is also normative, however, because in that responsiveness lies a responsibility that comes into being even before the adults who become part of Sara's

pedagogical circle may know what to do with it. In a sense they introduce the shape of the world to her through their pedagogical intentions and actions. I believe it is the existence of this pedagogical circle that more than any other factor sustains Sara through the hardships she experiences.[2]

Overtly, of course, Sara's most important pedagogical relationship is the one she has with her father. When we first see them riding in a carriage, they face the camera and sit shoulder to shoulder. Captain Crewe often turns toward his daughter so that we see her face fully, and his in profile. He and his daughter seem comfortable with each other as they discuss the reasons why he must go to war. They seem believably fond of each other. Still, it is necessary for them to be separated.

Captain Crewe's sense of pedagogical responsibility to his daughter helps him perform the difficult task of leaving her behind at Miss Minchin's school. Once he and Sara are alone in what is to become her room, she sits on his lap and attempts to comfort him. In medium close-up she touches his face lightly with her fingertips. "Are you learning me by heart?" he asks.
"I already know you by heart," she replies. "You're inside my heart."

Despite the possibilities for emotional excess in this moment, Sara's father tries to act with the self-control expected of a soldier. "Let's pretend we're in India and I'm going away with the troops for a few days, shall we?" he suggests. "We've fought this kind of battle before, and you never cried once when I went away. Remember?" Sara nods as he continues. "This is going to be our hardest battle. But we'll be good soldiers, won't we?"
"Yes, Daddy," she responds. Her father suggests that they say good-bye the way they used to in India, and when Sara tearfully agrees, he says gently, "Alright. Chin up. Go to the window and look out." Sara does this and he

asks her to repeat a poem they have used before as a way of parting. He recites it for her first:

> *My daddy has to go away but he'll return most any day.*
> *Any time now I may see my daddy coming back to me.*

Sara goes to the window and begins to repeat the poem but has to stop. "I can't do it this time," she cries, running back to her father. "I can't." Her father kneels as she approaches him and puts his arms around her. We watch from behind Captain Crewe as Sara looks at his face and discovers that there are tears in his eyes. "I guess we're not such good soldiers as we thought," he says, his vulnerability giving her renewed courage.
"Oh yes we are!" she says. "I *can* do it! I will!" She sets her face grimly and runs again to the window.

Throughout this parting experience the camera allows Sara and her father privacy and dignity. We watch from behind her as she stands in medium close-up at the window, repeating the poem. After a moment we hear the sound of a door closing. Sara whirls around in panic, then turns again to look out the lace curtains drawn across the window. We watch from behind her again as the sound of a carriage retreats, although at no time do we see her face or what she, herself sees. What we can see is that the white lace of her collar matches the lace curtains at the window in a way that somehow humanizes even that potentially imprisoning piece of architecture.

As a child, Sara has no understanding of what a war is or why her father needs to be part of one. She even suggests at one point that she would like to go with him. Reciting a poem to say good-bye may appear stilted to contemporary audiences accustomed to talk shows where the spilled emotions of participants make up the substance of entire programs. But as a familiar ritual, speaking these lines provides a present-based, future-oriented structure

that *both* Sara and her father can draw strength from because "most any day" he'll be returning.[3] Both Sara and her father are happily interdependent, and it is important to note that in this late thirties film there is no cinematic shame in being so.

Captain Crewe frequently uses plural pronouns when referring to situation he and Sara find themselves in. Sara comments when she first sees Miss Minchin's Seminary that the school looks dark and he responds that nothing would look particularly cheerful to *them* on that particular day. Later he comments, "I'm afraid *we* aren't quite as good soldiers as *we* thought." Sara replies, "Oh yes *we* are."

Sara and her father both see the other as essential to the experience of their shared world. Captain Crewe has accepted the charge of protecting and teaching his daughter how to live in that world, and he is willing to serve as her example. But it is very clear that the pedagogical nature of their relationship is such that she teaches him as much as he teaches her. Seeing her father doubt his ability to be a good soldier provides Sara with the impetus she needs to master her own composure. What she cannot do for herself, she *will* do for or with him.

By sharing his calling or occupation with her, Sara's father gives her a great gift. "This will be our hardest battle," he says, "but we'll be good soldiers." However she interprets being a good soldier, she draws strength from the belief that she is involved in the same activity as her father while they are apart.[4] Whether she attempts to discipline the unruly buttons on her shoes with a button hook, or plays sentinel to a romantic tryst between Miss Rose, her teacher, and Mr. Geoffrey, the riding master, Sara never forgets the calling her father has left her. Because of it she stays active and in the world, instead of giving way to depression.

Even as a servant in Miss Minchin's house she still follows the events of the war. She knows about the siege of British troops at Mafeking. She knows when shipments of troops are coming into the hospital in London. Instead of seeing herself as doomed or a prisoner, Sara believes in her own ability to make things happen.

A Contrafactual Stance

In addition to her father, Sara has other adult allies. When she starts her first day at Miss Minchin's she opens her window to look out and sees a tall, turbaned Indian with a parrot on his shoulder standing inside the open window of the house immediately across from her.[5] It is significant that these windows open out on the world. Far from being imprisoned by such architectural structures, Sara is aided by them in maintaining her relationship with the world - a world we have already seen to be manageable for someone even as young and small as she is.

The Indian, whose name is Ram Dass, explains to Sara that he is servant to Lord Wickham, who owns the house opposite her window. She amazes him by speaking Hindustani and declares her intention of being at the window almost every day, in case he wants to talk about India. Miss Rose enters the room while Sara and Ram Dass are talking and waits for them to finish. She explains that they must hurry to breakfast because Miss Minchin hates for anyone to be late.

Sara confides the trouble she is having in buttoning her shoes – something she has never had to do for herself before. Without ridiculing her lack of ability, Miss Rose kindly offers to help. "Buttons are difficult things," she says, offering Sara an acceptable excuse for her problems with them. Miss Rose helps Sara with her shoes, then leads her by the hand into the dining room. In so doing she acts out the meaning of the word pedagogy: *paides* (child) and

agogos (leading). She continues 'leading' Sara into experiences as long as they are both at the school. In her willingness to follow and learn, however, Sara also leads Miss Rose. Mutual responsiveness is an important aspect of their relationship.

Miss Rose is also with Sara when the girl realizes from the postmark on a letter that her father is among the besieged soldiers at Mafeking. Again the teacher listens to Sara's concerns and tries to comfort her. Through her gaze she expresses her willingness to <u>be</u> in the presence of Sara's fear for her father. Through her touch and gesture she offers Sara the support of her own physical and emotional being.[6]

And it is the caring and tactful Miss Rose who is given the task of telling Sara that her father is reported dead. Miss Rose's challenge, of course, is finding a way to give such crushing news to the young girl, knowing as she does that Captain Crewe's death will mean much more than the loss of someone she loved deeply. The news she has for Sara will change her life forever.

Sara has been sent to her room to wait alone. She looks very much the princess in a blue and white lace dress with puffed sleeves and a blue sash. Her stockings are white, her slippers and the ribbon in her ringletted hair are blue. We see her standing in the center of a space much more colorful and luxurious than when we last viewed it, a change apparently brought about by her father's request. Up until now it must have reassured her that even in his absence he continues to influence her life.

Miss Rose's manner is grave when she comes into the room. Sara, of course, senses something is wrong. In medium close-up we watch Miss Rose walk toward a chair and then, seated, draw Sara to her, reminding her that as a soldier's daughter she must be courageous no matter what happens. Of

course Sara resists what she hears, at times stamping her foot or crying out. She knows her father was besieged at Mafeking, but she also knows that the siege of Mafeking has been relieved. She assumes he is safe with the rest of the soldiers. As she has in the past, Miss Rose offers the support of her entire being, holding Sara while she cries out in anger and disbelief that even though Mafeking has been relieved, the relief came too late for some of the men.

For once Sara's logical pragmatism offers her no assistance. This may be because news of her father's death invalidates her own experience. Captain Crewe wrote to Sara that at two o'clock on her birthday she was to think of him while at the same time he would be thinking of her. She did as he instructed, finding a quiet place where she could be alone. She firmly believes that she 'felt' her father's presence and knows that he is alive.[7]

In sharing the painful news of Captain Crewe's disappearance with Sara, Miss Rose demonstrates her concern for the young girl not just in the moment of hearing the news, but in the uncertainties of her future. Miss Rose acts with a sympathy based on that concern and arising from her pedagogical ability to be with the child in her trauma, while at the same time transcending that pain and seeing Sara as survivor in a future world.[8]

Miss Rose may seem old fashioned in her insistence that Sara not give way to feelings of sadness of grief. Certainly as an expectation it is counterfactual in that Miss Rose treats Sara *as if* she can maintain her composure, and therefore her strength, even though she probably cannot. This way of being toward Sara is important, however, because there is something Miss Rose knows that Sara does not know. She knows – or rather believes – that Sara can be resourceful enough to deal with the cataclysmic turn events in her life have taken. She also knows, or at least intuits that the direr Sara's experience of the world becomes, the greater her need for some ordering principle will

be.[9] Although her own power in that world is limited, Miss Rose attempts to give Sara that sense of order and meaning, as well as she, herself, understands it.

The Power of a Secret

Miss Rose does not play this supportive role in Sara's life alone, however. Geoffrey Hamilton, another instructor at the school, is also supportive of Sara. On a day when Sara is meant to go riding with him she confides that she would rather talk about Mafeking and her concern for her father. He willingly agrees. He has already noticed that there are tears in her eyes, although she insists they are due "to the London fog." He assures Sara, sitting on the steps with her, that the situation at Mafeking is indeed grave, but that new soldiers are arriving there every day. In fact, he says that he will soon be among them.[10]

Geoffrey then requests that Sara do him a favor. He whispers to her that he and Miss Rose want to get married before he leaves – or so we infer since we see the secret being shared and observe Sara's excited reaction, including her statement that he'll probably need to go shopping for "something gold and round." Geoffrey wants Sara to ask Miss Minchin's permission to go shopping with Miss Rose for an afternoon. At that time the wedding will apparently take place.

The reason why the secret must be kept is not fully explored in the film, but the implication is that Miss Rose must keep her teaching job while Geoffrey is away because he himself is penniless. In a subsequent scene we learn that Miss Minchin has raised Miss Rose "from a foundling," and is somewhat jealous of her affections. We can, of course, question Geoffrey's morality in making a young child an accomplice to something of this nature.

The effect of the secret, however, is that the possibility of a concealed world is created for Sara. Up to this point in the film we have seen her as energetic, loyal, outspoken, and practical. The use of her imagination has not seemed essential to her character. With the possibility of a shared secret, however, her life is immensely enlarged.[11] She now becomes aware of and able to live in two worlds - one visible and one concealed. In the visible world she may be a rich, privileged child, but in the concealed world she becomes a person whose help is needed. Since Sara wants to think of herself as a soldier – and soldiers are in the business of getting things done - this is an important awareness for her to have.

Sara also shares a secret with another ally in the film – Miss Minchin's brother, Bertie. Although he appeared as stuffy and class-conscious as his sister when Sara first met him, on their next meeting she sees him dancing in the hall and comes out to dance with him. On her birthday he pulls her aside from the other girls and crouching down to her height, gives her a framed picture of him in "younger and happier days," when he was known on the music hall stage as "Bouncing Bertie."

His sister, we are aware, is scandalized by his earlier career and doesn't want anyone to know about the former occupation of her "professor of drama and elocution." Having learned from Geoffrey about secrets, Sara immediately confides, "This had better be our secret then, hadn't it?" To this Bertie responds, "Mum's the word." Sara then gives him the gift of a pipe, creating another secret because his sister doesn't allow him to smoke. "Mum's the word," they say again, laughing and winking in good-natured duplicity.

These two events, located close to the time when Sara learns that her father is missing in action seem important. They allow this indulged and privileged child to prepare for the devastating loss of her father, her beautiful clothes and

her comfortable room, all in the same day. In fact she becomes so proficient at living in this second, created world that one day when Ram Dass comes to retrieve his parrot from the attic room where Sara now lives, she is able to laugh and say, "She is over there on the book case."
"Bookcase?" Ram Dass asks. Like us he can only see empty shelves on one side of the room.
"Oh, I forgot," Sara says. "I pretend they're bookshelves and fill them with beautiful books." She continues to tell him about her room, which she describes as "so little and so high above everything that it is almost like a nest in a tree. With her imagination Sara has transformed the site of her banishment into a place of secrecy and safety. She is, however, aided at all times by a *mise-en-scène* that provides her with a world filled with allies, and a manageable environment where security can be created.

Later, when life becomes especially difficult for Sara, Ram Dass and his employer, Lord Wickham – who is not as crotchety as he first appears – contrive to add some material comfort to Sara's room. While Sara sleeps Ram Dass apparently brings food, warm blankets and comfortable furnishings into her room.[12] He builds a fire in the fireplace and includes things for Becky, who has become Sara's friend.

Sara awakens to find her world completely changed. Luxury and a feeling of security are again hers. She accepts this gratefully, even feeling confident enough to take credit for the transformation. She reasons that she must have " . . .dreamed such a good dream that it came true." While this physical support for Sara comes at a time when she is hungry and beginning to weaken, Ram Dass consistently offers her something far more important. Throughout his interactions with her he offers Sara the gift of his silent, listening presence.

When he first visits her room, for example, he does not openly criticize the sparseness of the furnishings. To do so would be to tear down the fragile fabric of belief Sara has constructed about the room – belief that probably makes it possible for her to go on living there without despair. Yet even the irrepressible Sara admits that getting a fire going in the fireplace is the most difficult of all.

Ram Dass is a man of tact and sensitivity. Responding to her confession by saying sympathetically, "You must get very cold sometimes," would in no way be helpful to Sara. Instead it would remind her of what she is trying so courageously to overcome. When he responds with a silence that invites Sara to make whatever meaning she needs to of her experience, he shows her his willingness to be present in her life without drastically altering the shape she has tried to create for it.[13]

Sara's wealth, we see, has never depended entirely on material goods. She is blessed with understanding and support that help make her the resilient young person she is able to become. It is this support, and not merely her own tenacious nature that keeps Sara from giving up on her search for her father in discouragement.

A Posture of Belief

Just after she has learned of her father's disappearance, Sara begins to search through the streets of London for word of him. She asks a soldier if he was at Mafeking and if he knew her father. "They say he is dead," she tells the soldier, but I know it cannot be." He suggests she visit the Harvard hospital, which she does. There she finds Bertie standing by the door.

In disgust at his sister's behavior he has left the school, preferring "the less painful horrors of the battlefield," to her harsh treatment of Sara and Miss

Rose, whose relationship with Geoffrey has been discovered, and who has been thrown out of the school. While he intended to go to war himself, he tells Sara that Lord Roberts decided it was more important that he stay in London and cheer up the wounded. "Now," he tells Sara, stooping down to her eye level, "I'm practically in command of the hospital." She confides in him that she is searching for her father.

"Do you think he could be here?" she asks.

Bertie watches her for a moment and then replies, "It is possible. These things can happen." He lets her into the hospital and agrees to help her look through wards.

An establishing shot shows Sara and Bertie coming in the hospital door, as nurses and men in uniform hurry back and forth. The child and her friend climb to the top of a landing and then are called back by a high-ranking officer with mutton chop whiskers and a monocle. "Orderly?" he commands. The camera offers us a balanced, medium shot of all three figures at this point.

"What's this child doing here before visiting hours?"

"You see, sir . . ." Bertie begins hesitantly.

"Well, well, well!" the officers chides.

Sara speaks, easily adopting military language. "The Major is helping me look for my father, sir. He was wounded at Mafeking and I feel sure he might be here. Somewhere."

"Major?" the colonel repeats with incredibility.

Bertie now finds his tongue. "Yes, Sir," he says, then glances at Sara, who is watching them both carefully, and adds in a lowered voice, "To her. We're old friends, sir. I knew her father, Captain Crewe, who was reported dead at Mafeking. The child's sure there's some mistake so I'm helping her search the wards."

Sara asks the officer if he can tell her anything about her father. "Sorry, my dear," he answers quietly, inclining his head toward her. "I'm afraid I can't."

Then he straightens and in an official voice says, "Very well, then, uh . . . Major. Carry on."

This rather stuffy-seeming gentleman who has never met Sara before responds to her with an attempt to offer her what he instinctively feels will be of help. By affording the title 'Major' to Bertie, he honors Sara's need for someone she can believe in and defines the intention of that simple act as pedagogical. Although he cannot truthfully give the young girl words of comfort, he can give her protection for her search in the shape of freedom from restrictive hospital rules. However, his most visually impressive answer to her plea for help is simply his bending toward her. It is the response of an adult whose way of being in the world is grounded in pedagogical awareness.

Sara doesn't find her father on her first visit to the hospital, but she tells Bertie she will come again. As they stand outside the hospital he expresses concern for her safety. Crouching down as before he cautions her not to run away from the school too often. Interestingly his concern is not about her being out on the street alone, but about the punishment she might receive from his sister for disobedience. He assures Sara that he will keep a sharp eye out for her father.

Sara asks, "You don't believe I'll find my father, do you?" Bertie now places his hands on her shoulders, and maintains this stooped and probably uncomfortable position for the rest of their conversation.
"Of course I do," he says. "I told you, missing men often turn up."
Sara's expression, formerly tenuous, now becomes resolved. "Then I guess I'd better keep coming," she says. "You might not know him if he's very much changed."
"Of course, dear," Bertie says. "You come."

Bertie's support for Sara is essential at this point. She is well established in her newly layered life – that of relatively docile and obedient servant at the school, of sharer of adult secrets and of boldly active searcher in the greater world. Yet this world is fragile. Its fragments are held together by trust and belief and could still be easily crushed. The fact that Bertie does not tell her, even with the greatest gentleness that her task is hopeless, strengthens the one glimmer of hope she has created in her life. And by the language of gesture and glance he uses in her presence, Bertie further promises her that he will be her ally in the difficult job of hoping when there is no reason to. In fact, in those moments when her hope begins to waver, he will offer his.

The basis for Sara's miraculous ability to find and restore her father's memory seems to be her ability to love and trust and believe in herself. Those qualities are based on the love and trust and belief she has received all her life from many different adults. Certainly, Becky, the servant girl, also loves and supports Sara. This relationship is not presented as valuable within the *mise-en-scène*, however. Becky is poor, uneducated and in need of rescue herself. She does not have the ability to influence Sara's status in any way. In some senses the same can be said for Bertie, or Miss Rose and Geoffrey, all of whom are somewhat vulnerable to loss of status themselves. The narrative does not highlight their vulnerability, however, as it does Becky's. Within the context of the film, adults can and do help Sara. Children are not given the same ability.

CRUELTY AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

There are dangers for children in the London of this period, of course, but this thirties melodrama does not attempt to show them to us. If other children live in poverty, we only guess at it because of Becky. How at such a young age she came to be motherless and fatherless and forced to work such long hours

we are not told. We see only that Sara treats her with the kindness of an indulgent mistress and that Becky, in return, adores and wishes to serve Sara. Nothing in the cinematic treatment of Sara's impoverished state calls the social order into question in any way. Even the character and quality of the only adversarial relationship in Sara's life-world is tempered by the rules of socially appropriate conduct.

When Captain Crewe's lawyer brings news of his client's supposed death, Miss Minchin thinks immediately of the funds she has advanced his account so that Sara can have a grand birthday celebration. She threatens to "throw the girl out in the street." It is the lawyer who checks that impulse by reminding her that it will look bad for the school to have a former student begging in the streets outside. He suggests Sara be required to work to pay back her father's debts instead. Miss Minchin decides on that course. She immediately stops the party and sends the girls to their rooms. When Sara questions why this is happening, the head mistress silences her and bundles her off.

Immediately after Miss Rose tells Sara about her father, Miss Minchin enters the room carrying a black dress over her arm. Sara is standing at the window with her back turned toward the camera. "You understand, of course," says Miss Minchin, remaining by the door, "that these rooms can no longer be yours." Sara doesn't meet the head mistress' gaze, but looks down at the floor, and says nothing. "Come with me," Miss Minchin says.

In medium long shot Sara starts slowly toward the door, moves back to get her doll, Emily, and then solemnly walks through the doorway followed by Miss Minchin. We watch as they come into the richly appointed foyer outside what was Sara's room, walk up a short flight of stairs and after several cuts enter the place where she is to stay - apparently a storage spot for old furniture.

Miss Minchin tells Sara that this is to be her new room, and that all of her furnishings and clothes will be sold to pay part of the bill her father owes.

A dirty, uncurtained window at the right of the frame dominates these shots through its comparative brightness. The window is harsh in relationship to the one Sara looked through as her father left. It gives us graphic evidence of the change in her circumstances. We can see through it, however, the outline of another window: one in the house next door where the Indian servant, Ram Dass lives. He has already met and befriended the young girl. Even now the *mise-en-scène* does not allow her to be quite alone.

During this interaction the camera focuses on both figures in a balanced and centered frame. Sara continues to look down, her mouth shaped in a firmer, almost angry version of the 'pout she displayed at the opening of the film. As for Miss Minchin, she states her position – and ultimately Sara's - solemnly, as she might report the bad news of a drop in the value of her property. There is no attempt to berate Sara, no hint of the personal in her tone. Miss Minchin is speaking of business and she assumes Sara will be sensible and understand that bills must be paid, no matter what the sacrifice.

The head mistress goes on to inform the now penniless and fatherless girl that ordinarily she would go to an institution. "I hope you appreciate my kindness in not sending you away," she says, almost gently. Sara then looks toward her in medium close-up. She opens her mouth as if to speak, then closes it again. When the girl does not respond, Miss Minchin tells her she has borrowed a black dress from one of the girls, since Sara herself had nothing suitable in her former wardrobe. Miss Minchin then leaves, instructing Sara to put the dress on, along with some black shoes that will be sent up to her.

The next morning Sara enters the dining room and sits down. Apparently she has not grasped the fact that she can no longer associate with the other girls in the same way. Miss Minchin follows behind her. "Sara," she says, again in a neutral tone. "From now on you are not to sit with us. Return to your room and smooth down those curls. Then go to the kitchen."

Sara rises, again looking at Miss Minchin as if there is something she wants to say. Then she averts her eyes, turns and leaves the room, glancing back once over her shoulder. Again, Miss Minchin's tone is lacking in both sympathy for Sara's predicament, and delight at it. As a woman of business her goal is to keep up the appearance of respectability at her school as well as getting back the money owed her.

In a fantasy sequence later in the film, Sara dreams that she is a real princess, holding court with Bertie as her trusted jester and Ram Dass as her minister of state. Miss Minchin comes to her complaining that Geoffrey "stole a kiss" from Miss Rose and demanding that he be executed. Her constant refrain in this musical interlude is, "I know my rights, I know the law." That grounded pragmatism is her primary quality as an adversary. She will do anything that advances her monetarily or socially, as long as it falls within the realm of what is right or legal.

On only one occasion does Miss Minchin display any physically threatening behavior toward Sara. The head mistress is not happy to learn that Sara is out in the street "making a spectacle of herself." She tells her she must "give up this ridiculous search for her father and accept the fact that he is dead!" She orders Sara not to leave the house again. Sara answers Miss Minchin defiantly, saying she will never stop looking for her father. Miss Minchin's face hardens and she raises her hand. "Why, you ungrateful little . . ." she says.

At this point we see the only close-up in the film. Sara's round face, set in a look of mulish determination is centered in the frame. Although she doesn't say a word, her look – now directly at Miss Minchin - carries an outrage that even the older woman quails before. This close-up also legitimizes Sara's resistance cinematically. Given a choice between serving her father and serving a woman of business, there is really no choice at all.[14] Miss Minchin lowers her hand and walks away, locking Sara in her room.

The narrative incident that precipitates the film's final dénouement has already been described. When Ram Dass learns of the minimalist circumstances under which Sara is living he apparently convinces his employer, Lord Wickham, to better them. How he is able to move furnishings, food and clothes into her attic room while she sleeps we have no idea, although we have seen previously how easy it is for him to get across from his window and into hers.

When Miss Minchin comes into Sara's room the next morning and finds food and new furnishings, she immediately assumes they have been stolen. She knows no other way, of course, that these materials could have appeared. This is a woman who "knows her rights and knows the law." She does not attempt to appropriate any of the furnishings but, instead, does what a socially upstanding woman of commerce should do. She calls the police.

Sara escapes by crawling out her window and walking along the gutter to Ram Dass' window, taking Becky with her. It doesn't seem a difficult undertaking. The *mise-en-scène* has consistently reassured us that help is always near to Sara. True to its insistence on creating safe cinematic space, the camera now focuses on the children as they walk along the flat, level eaves of the roof, holding to the side of the building. There are no dizzying shots down to the ground. Becky frequently quakes, "Oh, Laz, Miss Sara," and holds Sara's

hand as they progress. But it is a short journey and they are met by Ram Dass at the other side. Then Sara rushes out the front door of Lord Wickham's and on to the hospital where she knows another load of soldiers has been brought in from Mafeking. (And where we know, through privileging shots at the hospital that her father is suffering from amnesia.)

Miss Minchin and the police pursue Sara, although she manages to elude them by running along side a trolley so that the police lose track of her. Miss Minchin finds out from Becky that Sara has gone to the hospital and again, takes off in pursuit. The headmistress is so determined to find Sara and see her put into jail for theft that she goes to the expense of hiring a taxi. She bullies her way into the hospital, just as an elderly Queen Victoria is being pushed out in a wheel chair. The Queen, as we would expect, has already talked to Sara, learned of her search and asked that the child be shown around the wards.

There is nothing Miss Minchin can say once Sara finds her father and the reunion somehow jars his befogged memory. Nor is there anything she would want to say except, perhaps, "I beg your pardon. How was I to know where the merchandise came from?" After all, Sara has money and position again and these are the factors that influence all Miss Minchin does.

Miss Minchin is not given an opportunity to apologize in the film, however. Just as she has been somewhat impersonal in dealing with Sara – except perhaps for her final overzealous pursuit – so the *mise-en-scène* is impersonal in its final dealings with Miss Minchin. Impersonal, but unequivocal, that is to say. Miss Minchin is abruptly dismissed as no longer of any narrative or cinematic importance.

It has been clear from the film's opening montage that that would be the case.

People like Miss Minchin who put business before honor and concern for the welfare of others will not prevail. They are no match for loyal, true-hearted daughters of the empire like Sara. We do not need to see Miss Minchin punished. In this film we are allowed to have faith that she will be.

SUFFERING AS INITIATION

Despite her impoverishment after Captain Crewe's disappearance, we have seen that Sara is never presented to us as humbled in any way. It is true that when Miss Minchin speaks to Sara about changes that will occur in her life now that her father is gone, the girl keeps silent. We might wonder at this since characteristically she has been free with her opinions and impressions. Is it grief that keeps her eyes down and her voice contained at this time? Or is it the fact that she is now bound by, and accepts, the same disciplined self-control as her father?

Immediately after Miss Minchin leaves Sara alone in her new attic room, an answer to these questions appears. A close-up of two burning candles signals the end of the day. In long shot, Sara stands in front of the window wearing a clean and respectable black dress and black shoes. The blue ribbon is still in her hair. She holds her doll Emily tightly in front of her, her pout now an insistent scowl. For the first time since she has learned about her father, Sara speaks.

What we hear from her is not a cry of fear for Captain Crewe, however, or even one of concern for her own predicament. Instead, she reasserts her unshakable belief that her father will return to her, as he promised. "I don't believe it!" she cries. "I don't! I won't!" On this last phrase she stomps her foot. Then she slowly turns to look out the bare window and repeats the poem she and her father said together the day he went away. In returning to this

ritual, Sara declares her willingness to impose on herself the soldierly discipline inherited from her father and in so doing, to keep faith with him. However she may bridle at the idea of Miss Minchin as kind, Sara knows that if money is owed, it must be paid. To that extent and of her own, free will, she will cooperate. She will never, however, accept her father's death because her own experience just before the lawyer's visit indicates otherwise.

The next morning, the girls at the school discuss what has happened while they gather around the breakfast table. In a subsequent shot we see Sara coming slowly and solemnly down the stairs appropriately dressed in black. Her clothes may register the sorry state of her circumstances, but her regal bearing does not. "Oh Miss," says Becky, who is cleaning the stair railing. "Is there anything I can do?"
Sara replies, unhumbled and with great dignity, "No, thank you, Becky." The two stand face to face as these words are spoken, equals in height if not in acceptance of their fates.

Shortly after this interaction Sara appears in the kitchen. Miss Minchin has ordered her to "smooth down her curls," and she has obviously attempted to, but has not been successful in doing so. This resistance of Sara's to feelings of powerless and depression over her father's disappearance apparently extends down to the roots of her hair. The cook may be cross with the young girl who declares she is "quite willing" to work in the kitchen. The adjustment to scullery work for a child who until recently had never fastened the buttons on her own high-top shoes will certainly be considerable. There is still respectability in Sara's life, however. Her dress is somber, but she is not in rags. She sits at a table to eat. She has a bed to sleep on.

DEPRIVATION AS EMPOWERMENT

None of the deprivations Sara experiences make a dint in her irrepressible energy or her belief in her own perceptions. She still moves with the same swift purposefulness. She still laughs and shows concern for others. In a shot/reverse shot conversation she reprimands Becky for believing that Captain Crewe is dead and they are all alone. He may be sick or wounded somewhere, Sara reasons, but he's not dead. When Becky asks how Sara knows this, she replies, "Something inside tells me."

Soon we see Sara preparing to leave the school. She splashes her face at a wash basin, throws a shawl over her head and shoulders, goes to the window, unlocks and opens it. In the next shot we see her out in what appear to be London's manageable streets. The few people there stay at a distance from her, their paths running parallel to hers. She is never threatened or approached. People are not a danger to this young child. Buildings are not prisons. When doors are closed, it appears she handily sneaks out windows, even when they are stories above the street.

At the end of the film Sara discovers her father in an alcove of the hospital because of his voice. Throughout his illness he has repeated her name over and over again. He says it now and she turns toward him. Immediately she recognizes her father and runs to his side. In a long take balancing father and daughter in the center of the shot Sara talks to Captain Crewe. "Daddy, it is you! I found you! They said you were dead but I knew you weren't!" She asks her father to hold her and not to go away again. Then she realizes that something is wrong with him. "Don't you know me?" she asks. "I'm Sara. Look at me! Look at me!"

Sara begins to cry and her father, still staring straight ahead says, "You mustn't cry. You must be a good soldier, you know."

At this Sara cries out, "But I have been a good soldier, and you don't know me!" This is apparently the one thing she hadn't expected.
"Where's Sara?" Captain Crewe says. "Where's my little Sara?"
"I'm Sara," she shouts almost angrily. After all, she has paid a great price for this moment. "I'M SARA." Finally Captain Crewe recognizes his daughter. He turns and looks at her. "You know me," she tells him joyfully. "You know me."

The final shots of the film show Sara standing beside Captain Crewe who struggles to rise from his wheelchair in order to salute Queen Victoria as she passes by. The strains of *Rule Britannia* rise in the background. The last image in the film is a medium close-up of Sara alone, saluting the Queen and smiling.

The Sara Crewe of the thirties is presented to us as a child who is strong enough to stand up to the tests hardship imposes on her. The entrance of the irrational into her life through her father's disappearance appears to be balanced by the pedagogical relationships that are available to her.[15] Like the forties movie children who follow her, her suffering is an initiation into a carefully ordered social world. It is, in fact, an opportunity for growth. That growth is both her privilege and her burden as a human being.

Sara's treatment as an innocent child is not Rousseauistic. She is not allowed to do as she pleases, even by her adoring father. It may well be this thirties child appears well served because she serves, and that because she attempts to please, attempts are made to please her. Her harmlessness or innocence in that sense could be seen as a commodity underpinning a social contract. Loyal members of society who act appropriately are rewarded, just as Puritans who brought up their children to fear God and follow His laws were rewarded

by profits in this world and the next. Perhaps it isn't as much of a jump from John Locke to Captain Crewe, Miss Rose or Bertie as we might have thought.

If this is true, however, all those adults who appear to relate to Sara pedagogically are merely pawns of the social order. Captain Crewe's attempt to face Sara toward the future, Rose's sympathy, Bertie's humility, all lose their significance as intentional acts. I am not willing to believe that these cinematic adults can be reduced to the sum total of their actions.

Pedagogical relationships are human relationships, and as such are era and even area determined, but what appears old fashioned in this pre-World War II film is still deserving of serious consideration. There is an atmosphere created by the reel characters who support the young girl in this movie world that can't be so easily minimized or dismissed. Can the bending of a rather pompous officer toward a worried child be reduced to mere social conditioning? Can the concern of a teacher for that child's feelings be reduced to that teacher's function as a cog in a patriarchal structure?

Sara herself would give these notions very little credence. If she, like Becky, can accept the notion that good dreamers dream things into being, can we not be gracious enough to acknowledge that within the *mise-en-scène* of *The Little Princess*, it is love that empowers Sara? And love in turn allows her to restore both her father's memory and with it, their life together. It is my choice to do so.

Of course I am aware that most children of the era we now live in are not so sweetly obedient. They may not express love for their fathers in the same way. And their fathers, in return, may not be so singularly devoted to them. Still, I will argue that in the 1939 movie life of Sara Crewe, her faithfulness and her father's devotion are not too sweet at all. They are precisely what the

movie is about. In that she is far more fortunate than the Sara Crewe of 1995, to whom we now turn our attention.

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[1] Cook (1996), p. 396. One year later, in 1940, Orson Welles began shooting *Citizen Kane* (1942) with muslin-ceilinged sets. This allowed Greg Toland, his photographer, to take subjective, low-angle shots that accentuated the dominance of the Kane figure.

[2] Bollnow (1989), p. 76. According to Bollnow, it is the pedagogical task of the adult to "create around the child the sphere of an ordered and meaningful world in which the child can grow and develop, so that as an adult he or she will be able to survive in the larger and harsher world." The term 'pedagogical circle' seems to describe this sphere.

[3] See Langeveld (1975), p. 10. According to Langeveld adults involved in pedagogical relationships with children acknowledge their need for an orientation to the present, but also try to help them believe that they can continue that way into the future. In that process the past is respected, yet kept in its place.

[4] Van den Berg (1961), pp. 41-45. Van den Berg points out that modern maturity with its multivalent pluralism is largely invisible to young children. Sara's father, on the other hand, leaves visible footprints behind that she can follow. Parents today might question the morality of his occupation, but what Sara understands is that her father in his beautiful uniform is in the business of getting things done. She sets out to do the same thing.

[5] There is some confusion about windows in the film. This is not the same lace-curtained window Sara stood before as her father left. Its appearance is quite different and its location would not have allowed her to see her father leaving. However, given no establishing shot of Sara's room we must conclude that she has more than one window, in addition to a balcony that looks out on the street.

[6] See van Manen (1993), Chapter Seven. It is because of the bond of trust Miss Rose has been able to establish with Sara that her glance and her physical presence are meaningful. Sara quickly saw through Miss Minchin's politeness to the calculating motives underlying it. Miss Rose, on the other hand, genuinely <u>is</u> the glance she bestows. To that, Sara responds with trust.

[7] In fact there is cinematic evidence that this exchange did take place. As Sara, in medium close-up says, "Oh daddy, I am thinking of you and I know you are thinking of me," the curtains at a small window to the right of her billow out, creating the visual suggestion that some kind of interaction is taking place.

[8] See Spieker (1984), p. 207. Spieker develops the idea that when an adult, standing in a pedagogical relationship with a child speaks to that child *as if* s/he can do a thing, the adult aids that child in becoming able to do it.

[9] Bollnow (1989), p. 78.

[10] It is difficult to know whether or not Geoffrey is being condescending to Sara at this point. All the adults in the film seem to overestimate the power of the British army, and

underestimate that of the Boers. Sara's own father has gone off with the intention of making the "stubborn" Boers behave.

[11] See van Manen (1996), p. 7-9 for example, for a discussion of the moral and personal significance of secrets in children's lives.

[12] We don't actually see this happening in the film, but we see Ram Dass looking through the "little window in the ceiling," and smiling. Later we see Ram Dass and Lord Wickham looking out the window at Sara and Becky in their finery. "The little Mrs. Sahib would be very grateful if she knew what you had done," Ram Dass says. Wickham responds gruffly that he didn't do it for thanks.

[13] See van Manen (1993), pp. 176-178. The author uses the term "pedagogical tact" to describe behavior such as Ram Dass' in this situation. In maintaining a "silent conversation" with Sara he signals his willingness to be present to her, waiting in relationship until she has something she is ready to say.

[14] The selection of a woman as the villain in this film, even though it is derived from Burnett's novel, places this film in the company of many Hollywood films of the thirties and forties that represented woman attempting to be successful in business as unnatural. *Mildred Pierce* (1945) is one notable example. Images of women in film are the topic of countless excellent books, however, and will not be examined in this study. Images of children, on the other hand, have infrequently been considered worthy of investigation.

[15] Langeveld (1975), p. 13. The author comments, "One aspect of what then keeps the world going is the reliability of man and responsibility between men; and, as far as I see, the only answer to the irrational fact of life is responsibility."

Chapter Four

REVISITING INNOCENCE: *A LITTLE PRINCESS* (1995)

Papa! Papa!

Sara draws a circle of chalk on the floor around her, then lies down inside it, crying and holding her doll. The camera shoots down on her, then rises higher and higher, eventually moving out the window to show us the turret she's lying in, guarded by gargoyles.

In 1995, Warner Brothers returned to the narrative of Sara Crewe with changes. This nineties movie version of the story is set in 1915 so that the war Captain Crewe takes part in is World War I. The school Sara attends, Miss Minchin's Seminary for Girls, is in New York. Her mother, now deceased, went to school there and her father considers New York safer than London.

When Captain Crewe is reported missing his money is seized by the British government and, as in the earlier film, Sara is left penniless. She becomes a servant at Miss Minchin's school where she is exposed to considerable drudgery. Her friendship with Becky and two other girls at the school, Ermengarde and Lottie becomes an important factor in her survival.

Sara makes no tour of New York hospitals. Instead, and unknown to Sara, her father is brought to live next door to the school, largely through the intervention of the East Indian servant Ram Dass, who takes on a magical role in this version of the Sara Crewe narrative. Sara discovers her father purely by accident as she seeks refuge from Miss Minchin in the house of Ram Dass' master, Mr. Randolph. Even then Captain Crewe does not recognize his daughter until Ram Dass' strange and mystical power clears his mind. Father and daughter are then reunited, Miss Minchin is punished, her school taken over and Becky and Sara return with Captain Crewe to India.

INNOCENTS IN PARADISE

When *A Little Princess* opens, before we even see the title of the film, we hear Sara's voice. "A very long time ago," she tells us, "there lived a beautiful princess in a mystical land known as India." Now the title of the film flashes on the screen, which shortly thereafter turns black. An iris-out shot then shows us the princess, while Sara, still unseen, carries on with her story. "She was married to the handsome Prince Rama who was banished to the enchanted forest by his evil stepmother."[1]

Sara continues to tell us that one day Princess Sita sees a wounded deer in the woods and begs Rama to go and help it. The blue-skinned Rama, who we later realize looks like Sara's father, draws a circle on the ground and says to Sita, "This is a magic circle. So long as you stay inside it, no harm can come to you." Then he leaves.

Sita does not stay in the circle, of course. She thinks she hears the prince calling to her for help and runs out of the circle to rescue him. Now unprotected she enters a menacing environment of huge thorn-trees and is captured by the ten-headed demon Ravana, who takes her to his castle to make her his bride. As soon as Ravana fills the screen, the film cuts to a long shot of Sara playing with a young, Indian boy in a place as beautiful and enchanted in appearance as anything we saw in the film's opening fantasy.

They sit on the huge and tumbled head of a Buddha figure lying partially submerged in a pool. Sara is dressed in a sleeveless, knee-length undergarment. The boy wears only loose fitting pants and a turban. An elephant plays near-by and the boy's mother, Maya, watches the two children pacifically. The camera tracks freely around them as they play and converse.

Sara asks Maya if she has ever seen a real prince. Maya replies she was married to one – the boy's father. When Sara insists that she means real princes and princesses, Maya answers, "All women are princesses. It is our right."

An aerial long shot convinces us that the children's playing space is truly idyllic. The camera then follows with one continuous long shot as Sara and her friend run ecstatically through head-high grasses, squealing and yelling in a frenzy of delight. The *mise-en-scène* here celebrates Sara and her friend as children of Rousseau, totally unencumbered by walls or roofs or the need to wear button-up shoes and tight-fitting clothes. The sounds that come out of their mouths are unintelligible. We know that parents prior to John Locke kept their children from crawling for fear it would make them animalistic. These movie children run like young animals on the hunt, communicating with each other entirely outside the conventions of established language.

This picture differs from the carefully composed portrayal of the Sara we saw in the 1939 film. It's difficult even to imagine that child running heedlessly through a sea of grass in something we would now describe as underwear. She is already molded by societal expectations of acceptable behavior before we meet her. If she was ever 'wild,' it has long been forgotten.

But what of this modern Sara who has lived happily in such sensual splendor and freedom? Hollywood has traditionally been suspicious of its energetic, freewheeling children. It is difficult to imagine her remaining in this natural state for long. In fact she may even be disciplined for having been there at all. That is the neo-Hobbesian legacy that Hollywood films appear to have inherited.

PARADISE LOST

A series of dissolves takes us from the children to panoramic aerial shots of a waterfall, then a river, then a sunset bathed Taj Mahal viewed from inside an arched window. The camera holds on the sunset as we hear Captain Crewe declaim in an almost Shakespearean voice, "I shall miss it here." The frame then fills with an unfocussed pattern of green leaves. We see Captain Crewe's back, filling only the right portion of the frame as he goes on: "India is the only country that stirs the imagination." A sitar, India's national instrument begins to play in the background.

"I wish we could stay here," says Sara, although the camera stays fixed on Captain Crewe. He turns and we see him now in profile, still alone in the frame.

"I know," he says, looking into the blank side of the screen. "But now that England's gone to war, I must go too. You understand that, don't you?" he asks.

"Yes," Sara says softly. We now see her for the first time in this new context. She and her father are in her sumptuously decorated bedroom and she is lying on an Indian-style canopy bed. He sits on the end the bed opposite her, still remaining on the right side of the screen. Considerable cinematic space is left between them.

The energy Sara displayed at the film's opening has disappeared and is replaced by an expectant lethargy. She gazes at her father with almost hypnotic adoration. "Maya says all girls are princesses," she tells him softly. "Is that true?"

"You can be whatever you believe," her father replies.

"What do you believe, Papa?" she asks.

He answers, "I believe that you are, and always will be, my little princess."

This discussion between Sara and her father is developed in conventional shot/reverse shot cinematography so that the illusion of their joint and continuous cohabitation of time and space is created, even though we see them singly more than we see them together. Where the earlier Sara and her father sat comfortably parallel to each other and centered in the frame, this contemporary child/parent pair seems uncomfortable together. They often speak oppositionally, looking directly at each other, yet their frequently presented single images cling to the sides of the screen that have been established as 'theirs,' making their moments together lack intimacy. They share the same cinematic space, and yet seem quite removed from each other.

The camera leaves father and daughter sitting on either end of her Scheherazade bed and takes us across a map of India to the ocean and the deck of a ship. There a subdued Sara in a white party dress leans on the ship railing at the right of the frame and looks out at the sea. Male hands drop a locket down over her head - perhaps a parallel of the protective circle that Rama placed Sita inside. We hear Captain Crewe's voice telling his daughter that this is something that belonged to her mother.

In medium close-up Sara opens the locket and holds it out so that we see the picture of a beautiful woman. Sara recognizes her mother in this picture, of course, but we, as viewers recognize the image of Princess Sita, the heroine of the story Sara narrates at the opening of the film. Captain Crewe then moves into the frame on Sara's left and leans down on the rail beside her so that their shoulders are parallel. He is dashing in a white dinner jacket and dark pants. As they talk they initially look out at the ocean, and not at each other. Except for the difference in their ages they appear to be lovers, lost in companionable reverie.

Sara asks her father what he loved most about her mother. "The way her face lit up when she laughed," he says. "Like yours." Saying this he thrusts his face very close to his daughter's. "Mostly," he goes on, "I loved dancing with her." He bends over, takes Sara in his arms and begins a semi-comic waltz around the deck. He presses his cheek awkwardly against hers, while the rest of his body jackknifes away. They dance in circles farther and farther from the camera, which now takes in the length of the deck. Unexpectedly, a turbaned figure with a monkey on his shoulder moves into the right corner of the screen and stands looking straight ahead with dark, solemn eyes. Sara and Captain Crewe now dance out of focus, and the sound of sitar music is superimposed over their waltz.

The introduction of this exotic male figure adds an element of mystery to a *mise-en-scène* that has already been presented to us in the context of fairy tale magic. Perhaps there is something about the jittery, uncomfortable relationship between Sara and her father this watchful figure can resolve. Yet for me at least, the fact that they have been placed under surveillance calls the nature of their relationship into question.

WHAT'S THE HARM IN INNOCENCE?

Both the thirties Sara and the Sara of the nineties are presented to us as innocent children. Etymologically, innocence as a quality or state of existence implies a lack of evil intent or ability to do harm. No aspect of the *mise-en-scène* of the earlier film contradicts that presentation. The same cannot so easily be said about this contemporary Sara, however.

It is only with regard to this contemporary child that the possibility of danger is introduced, even though both girls run the same risk of losing father, fortune and conceivably, life. From the moment the 1995 film begins, a subtle

association is suggested between its young protagonist and harm or harmfulness. Sara alludes to it when she informs us in voice-over of the spell that shrouds the lives of Rama and Sita. Captain Crewe also refers to that issue when he tells his daughter he has selected New York for her temporary residence not only because it's where her mother went to school, but also because he feels Sara will be safer there.

The *mise-en-scène* itself also offers us extensive evidence from the film's beginning that this contemporary Sara may not only be in danger, but may be dangerous, as well. To Puritan eyes, of course, even her initial wildness is a matter of concern. Properly disciplined children were not so careless in their actions, although for me as a contemporary viewer, that carelessness seems preferable to Sara's behavior in her father's presence. Then the same child who recently raced and whooped through tall grasses lies stretched out on her bed talking with a man similar in appearance to Prince Rama. Her body stilled, her voice hushed and lowered, she watches him almost hypnotically.

The appearance of the young actress playing Sara becomes important to note at this point. Liesel Matthews presents a very different physical coding than Shirley Temple did in the earlier movie. Although Temple was eleven at the time she made the film, she displayed the compact plumpness and round, rose-cheeked face we associate with childhood. Matthews on the other hand, is tall and leggy. Her face is long, her jaw slightly square, her eyes large and luminous. While Shirley-as-Sara appeared childlike, Liesl-as-Sara seems poised on the verge of a condition Hollywood has historically represented either negatively or with derision: she is approaching puberty.

Instead of appearing wild, heedless and, to Puritan eyes at least, in need of discipline, she suddenly seems compliant yet *knowing*, possibly even *desiring*. When her father confides to her on board the ship to England that her eyes

light up like her mother's – a woman recognized by us as Rama's lover, Princess Sita – Sara beams with validation. In this changed depiction of Sara the *mise-en-scène* asks us to agree with Graham Greene, articulating Freud, that her innocence is pretended - a thin veneer over layers of desire.[2] She may look innocent, but she is guilty underneath.

The comfortable-seeming relationship that seemed to exist between father and daughter in the thirties film can no longer flourish under these circumstances. Instead the daughter becomes suspect when she is with her father. If she covets her mother's position with him we can no longer regard her as harmless. Far from supporting the social order, she is a threat to its smooth continuance. Whether the threat she poses is due to Hobbesian evil, to poor training or to inadequately repressed Freudian desire, at the very least she must be separated from her father. Beyond that she must be disciplined, contained and, if possible, cured.

In looking at Sara this way, of course, it is easy to become overly interpretive. Rather than imposing meaning on her behavior, perhaps we should take her opening narration at face value. The placing of the Rama/Princess Sita story at the beginning of the film seems to invite us to conclude that Sara's father, like Prince Rama, has fallen under some kind of spell, and that Princess Sita, who needs his protection to survive shares this spell with him. Since my interest is in the movie child, Sara, however, and not particularly in her parents, this reading is also problematic for me.

Neither Rama nor Sita are children. In fact there are no children in the story that Sara revisits repeatedly throughout the film. That being the case, how can she be part of this narrative world she finds so attractive? I begin to see the unenviable complexity of her cinematic life. Sara wants to be significant to her father, who for some reason is uncomfortable in her presence. The only

guidance she seems to have for her behavior is the belief that all girls are princesses and that like the adult Princess Sita, she, too, is worthy of rescue. But this requires that she give up her wild, ecstatic behavior and become passive and worshipful. It also requires that she give up any notion of herself as an initiator of action.

As I watch Sara and her father on the ship it is easy to see that the *mise-en-scène* assists her in this tricky transformation. Her long hair is curled and shiny. Her clothes, although proper in every respect, accent her slender, long-legged beauty. She stares off into space as moodily as any romantic heroine. Yet she succeeds too well in becoming empty of herself in order to be attractive to her father.

She laughs at his jokes, dances with him and seems impressed with his knowledge. But where the earlier Sara was confident enough to point out Captain Crewe's inexact use of language, and even to offer him advice, the Sara of the nineties seems to have no substance of her own except for her ability to make up stories.

Where Hollywood films have formerly delighted in images of children who look guilty but are in fact innocent, the reverse seems to be the case with this nineties child. Watching her, I begin to suspect that she will be far more in need of rescue than in a position to accomplish it. However it is questionable whether or not she can expect to *be* rescued, since the *mise-en-scène* insists on presenting her as fallen from innocence and grace. Whether or not she will have the resourcefulness to rescue herself remains to be seen.

CINEMATIC SPACE AS THREAT

When Sara and Captain Crewe arrive at Miss Minchin's Seminary for Girls in New York, they ride through the city in a carriage. The camera pans the skyline as they approach the school, which looks very much like a fairy-tale castle surrounded by a concrete forest. Before father and daughter even enter the school, Sara stands with her head tilted back staring up at the high, sheer walls the camera then reveals to us. When the first Sara elevated her glance it was because she was praying. Our contemporary Sara's upward glance is quite different, however. She looks up not to seek anything but to observe an ominous, vertically impenetrable space she has never encountered before.

Father and daughter are met at the door by Miss Minchin's sibling – an overweight and overly romantic woman named Amelia. This time they are expected and invited to come in. In a long shot we see the head mistress mincing down a curved, high-ceilinged staircase, arms held rigidly at her sides the way civilized women apparently move. She wears black satin and is proper in every way, although we notice a white streak in her black hair that ties her to a number of evil, celluloid women.[3]

She offers the Captain her hand, and Sara retreats behind his shoulder. This contemporary Miss Minchin seems friendly at first, although we note that she admires Sara's locket a little too obviously. Sara seems to note the fact too and draws even further away. In this reaction she differs from the thirties Sara, who regarded the head mistress with much more open appraisal.

As Sara and her father tour the school we see long shots that emphasize its horizontal and vertical vastness. High-ceilinged hallways stretch endlessly above and before Sara. In case we missed the significance of Sara's upward glance outside the school, the same kind of shot is repeated twice more inside. Walls were not significant in the cinematic treatment of the thirties

Sara, but when the nineties Sara leaves the utopian world of India, the *mise-en-scène* of her life reads strongly of danger and containment. Modern viewers are accustomed to the unsafeness of cinematic space. Since Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) no area of domestic movie life has been inviolable.[4] As she enters the ominous walls of Miss Minchin's Seminary for Girls, she is unfortunately just another cinematic child whose terrorizing serves as our entertainment.

TOGETHER IN ISOLATION

The nineties presentation of Sara and her father's farewell epitomizes the focus of their relationship, which is not on duty or belief that the performance of duty creates a future, but on the personal experience of the moment. Where the camera directed our gaze to Sara in the thirties film, it now concentrates on the pain of the father over this separation. He sometimes holds the focus of the camera even when Sara is talking and seems so much more composed when he is in the frame alone that we wonder how the two will be able to be together long enough to approach the subject of saying good-bye.

Perhaps it is not surprising that what he chooses to talk to his daughter about in their last moments together is not the possibility of future reunion, or of any future at all, but the importance of believing in magic. After assuring Sara that he has rented the best room in the school for her, with windows and a fireplace and rich furnishings, and after introducing her to a new doll named Emily, Captain Crewe tells his daughter that, "dolls make the very best friends. Just because they can't talk doesn't mean they can't listen." He is sitting in a window seat as he speaks. Sara approaches and sits on his lap as he continues. We see them in mid-close-up. "When we leave them alone in our rooms," he continues, "they come to life."

"They do?" Sara asks and the camera offers us such an extreme close-up that their faces escape the screen.
"Yes," her father says, "but before we walk in and catch them they return to their places, quick as light."
Sara asks, "Why don't they come to life in front of us so we can see it happen?" He answers, "Because it's magic. And magic has to be believed. That's the only way it's real."

The camera dissolves to mid-close-up again as he says, "Whenever you're afraid or miss me terribly, just tell Emily. She'll get a message to me wherever I am. Then I'll send a message right back to her so that when you hug her, you'll really be hugging me." He appears to choke on his words.
"It's alright, Papa," she whispers. "I'm going to be fine." The camera moves in again for an extreme close-up of his face and holds there while she strokes it repeatedly. Something about his survival seems to be more questionable, or at least interesting, than hers. Or so the eye of the camera seems to indicate.

"What are you doing?" he asks with agitation. "Memorizing me?" Sara replies as her older counterpart did that she already knows him by heart. What she doesn't add, and can't quite truthfully say, is that he is already *in* her heart.

Just as the cinematography of the farewell between father and daughter emphasizes their distance from each other, it places considerable emphasis on their physical parting, which has obviously become essential. There is, in fact, no proper way they can stay together. From a long shot of Captain Crewe and Sara sitting dejectedly together in her room, the camera cuts to a shot down on a horse-drawn carriage as Captain Crewe approaches it and looks up from the street. Our point of view is his as we look up to see Sara in mid-close-up staring dejectedly out her window. She is holding Emily and looking down at her father while her open right hand rests on the windowpane.

"Good-bye, little princess," Sara's father calls sadly. Then he enters the cab, and we see Sara at the window again. In a series of cuts from cab to window Captain Crewe moves farther and farther away from her. We see a final shot of the cab turning the corner but our point of view is now from inside the window. All we see of Sara is her right hand resting on and then sliding down the glass, in a gesture that implies entrapment behind the window's cold bars.[5] While Sara's isolation is emphasized in these shots, it is not a new experience for her. Except for the moments with Maja and her son, Sara has been without real companionship since the film began.

A Child Alone

Where the thirties Sara was greeted and supported on her first morning at the school by both Ram Dass and Miss Rose, the *mise-en-scène* of the nineties Sara allows her to make the transition to a new school without pedagogical support of any kind. We see a long shot of Sara hurrying out her bedroom door while still tying up her pinafore. Her position in the frame is slightly skewed at this point – and the doorway dwarfs her height. She is struggling, the camera seems to tell us, to find her balance in an overwhelming world.

As she moves quickly down the high-ceilinged hall we hear her father, in voice-over, saying, "but they return to their places, quick as lightning." Sara rushes back to look. We look through the keyhole with her and see Emily, sitting quietly on a chair in the room. "Gosh, she's fast," Sara says with amazement. It is no surprise that she is quite prepared to believe in the aura of magic her father has created around the doll. This is all he has been able to leave her with in making the transition to what quickly becomes a complex situation.

Again we see Sara hurrying down the high-ceilinged hall, then pausing at the top of the stairs when she discovers a school picture of her mother. - the same picture Sara carries in the protective circle of the locket her father gave her. "Sara," Miss Minchin calls to her, standing rigidly at the bottom of the stairs. "We are not accustomed to delaying our breakfast for one student."

Sara begins to descend quickly, trying to explain that she has seen a picture of her mother. Miss Minchin interrupts. "You're not the only girl here," she says. "You must remember that." It is not until later in the film that she carries this statement to its logical conclusion, informing Sara with relish that she is not a little princess anymore, either.

Monsieur Dufarge, the French teacher now comes into the foyer and stands next to Miss Minchin. We see the three figures in long shot – adults on one side, Sara on the other in a clearly polarized tableau. Whereas the adults tended to stand around the thirties Sara, bending toward her, Miss Minchin remains rigid, and Monsieur Dufarge bends only enough to peer at this contemporary child through his monocle.

Miss Minchin informs Sara that she will start French lessons in the afternoon. Sara tries to protest that she already speaks the language, but Miss Minchin reprimands her for arguing and forces her to apologize. Sara does this in fluent French. Monsieur Dufarge seems enchanted and even points out to Miss Minchin that Sara's French is better than hers. On the whole, however, he is far more enchanted by the smell of sausages coming in from the dining room.

If Miss Minchin is actively hostile and Monsieur Dufarge too engrossed in filling his stomach to be concerned with this contemporary girl's welfare, what other adults offer her pedagogical support? Are there Miss Roses or Geoffreys or

Berties or other nameless but well intentioned adults who become part of her life?

The answer, unfortunately, is no. Amelia Minchin replaces Bertie Minchin in this version of the Sara Crewe narrative. She is terrified of her sister and can offer nothing to the young girl. It is Sara who encourages Amelia to escape her sister's tyranny and run away with the milkman to a life Sara predicts will be romantic and exciting. Aside from Captain Crewe, Miss Minchin and Amelia, there are no other significant human adults in the film.

LEGITIMIZING ABANDONMENT

In *The Little Princess*, Captain Crewe sends a letter to his daughter, expressing his concern for her and telling her that he'll be thinking of her at exactly two o'clock on her birthday. He asks her to think of him at that time as well, so that even though he is gone they can still, in a sense, be together. In the nineties movie the letter of support is sent from Sara to her father. She reads the letter to us as she sits in the same window seat where she and her father said good-bye. In it she expresses her aloneness.

> "Dear Papa, I miss you. Things are fine, but I never thought there'd be so many rules at school. I guess they're for a purpose and I'm trying hard to obey them, but I get the feeling I'm doing something wrong. I hope when you read this it kindles your heart. I'm so proud of you. I think of you every moment."

As Sara reads she looks down into the street and sees her elderly neighbor, Mr. Randolph, saying good-bye to his son, John, who is going off to war. She probably does not notice the tall, turbaned Indian who stands with the old man, and holds him as he cries, although viewers will recognize him as the mysterious figure from the ship.

Watching this poignant scene, Sara begins to cry, too. In extreme close-up we see her tears falling down on the letter. Sounds of battle provide an auditory bridge into the next shot, where Captain Crewe reads her letter outside his dugout. His face is empty of emotion, but falling rain suggests the teardrops Sara sheds for him.

Captain Crewe promised to write his daughter every day and may well have. We are not privileged to knowledge of those letters, just as Sara is not privileged to the wartime views of her father that we, as viewers, are offered. What we can see is that Captain Crewe is overwhelmed and in shock. His face is empty and drawn as he reads her letter, sitting outside his foxhole in an area the rain has turned into a sea of mud. Bombs burst and people shout in the background. It becomes understandable that promises made by fathers to daughters in such a world might not be kept.

In the thirties film the reverse is true. Captain Crewe's suffering in battle is not made visible to viewers. Instead viewers are offered evidence of his reliability and active concern for his daughter through letters and the keeping of his appointment with her on her birthday. The *mise-en-scène* of the thirties film therefore supports the honoring of parent-child contracts; that of the nineties film rationalizes breaking them. Balancing the visible with the invisible is clearly a skill modern film viewers need to acquire.

THE CHILD ENCIRCLED BY PEERS

With no adult allies, Sara looks to her peers for support. She makes friends with some of the girls at the school: in particular the unconfident and slow-witted Ermengarde who is belittled by Miss Minchin as well as many of her peers, and Lottie, a very young child given to tantrums because she has no mother. Many of the other schoolgirls are impressed by Sara's fertile

imagination. She has the courage, and the ability to depart from the text of the boring stories they're forced to read each other during reading hour, adding elements of heroism and romance they had never thought of themselves. A cadre of girls begins coming into her room at night to listen to her stories, even though it is against school rules. Even Becky, the servant girl listens to Sara's tales. "Sometimes," she tells Sara later, when they are both poor and living in the attic, "your stories about the magic are all that get me through the day."

It is to the magic world of India and of Rama and Sita that Becky refers. Sara returns to this narrative in her room at night when her peers visit her, surrounding her on her bed where she appears very much an exotic princess, draped in a saffron cloth. "Rama approached the thorny cliff," she says, "unaware that Ravana was waiting for him." She continues to narrate how Ravana loaded ten arrows into his bow, each dipped in deadly poison, and shot them at Rama. The arrows fell to the ground, each giving out its poison and Rama collapses. As the poison rises, we hear sounds of battle and see Captain Crewe struggling to carry John Randolph up a hill. Clouds of mustard gas rise around them. Captain Crewe staggers and finally falls to the ground among a heap of other bodies.

After a blackout, we see a smiling Sara in extreme close-up, blowing out candles on her birthday cake. Thinking of the thirties version of this narrative, as well as the recent battle scenes, it becomes clear that this is the day the young girl will probably learn of her father's supposed death. The earlier Sara had many allies around her at that time. She also had the conviction that just before she heard the news she had talked to her father. All this sustained her and kept her from despair after the news was delivered.

The Sara of the nineties has no such advantages, however. Peer relationships do provide her with some comfort and enjoyment. But Sara's

peers have no more power or authority to deal with adversity than she does. And the adversary she faces is far more personal and therefore far more dangerous than the socially controlled Miss Minchin of 1939.

CRUELTY AS REVENGE

Consistently the thirties version of the Sara Crewe narrative focused on social obligations while the nineties version places an emphasis on personal experience. The Miss Minchin of the nineties, too, is far more personal in her persecution of Sara than the English head mistress proved to be. Whereas that woman concerned herself with what was rightfully hers under the law, the contemporary Miss Minchin takes a personal interest in, and dislike of Sara, from the opening of the film. It is an interest that seems to be based on envy of the young girl's privileged status, and on the fact that she has a father who gives her everything she wants.

One night the girls are gathered around the fire in the library while Miss Minchin plays the harp. She has directed Sara to read aloud from a book. Apparently the book does not please Sara, and she begins to tell a new story with great dramatic flair. Miss Minchin stops playing and snatches the book away from her. "What are you doing?" she asks with amazement.
Sara replies, "I couldn't imagine Charlotte marrying that awful man, so I imagined a different ending.
"You *imagined*," Miss Minchin says mockingly.
"Don't you ever do that?" Sara asks softly. "Believe in something just to make it real?" She is, after all, only attempting to follow her father's parting instructions, just as the thirties Sara attempted to 'soldier on.'

Miss Minchin pauses, her face twisting with underlying emotion. Then she says sarcastically, "I suppose that's very easy for a child who has everything.

Well, from now on there'll be no make-believe at this school during reading hour or at any other time." She is practically shouting by the end of this speech. "Is that clear?" she demands. All the girls cry out in agreement, while Sara looks dejectedly into her lap.

Again, there is considerable cross-cutting from extreme close-ups of Miss Minchin to Sara during this exchange, although rather than the tradition of faces occupying opposite sides of the frame as Sara and her father did, both Sara and Miss Minchin now appear on the right. This makes it impossible to imagine that anything remotely like a conversation is taking place. It also indicates that this contemporary Sara is threatened by Miss Minchin in a way unimaginable in the thirties film. This nineties Sara's right to an area of the frame strictly belonging to her is gone. Miss Minchin violates her space, to use a contemporary metaphor, and the *mise-en-scène* of the film supports her in doing so.

Considering the closed rigidity of Miss Minchin's face while she speaks, we might wonder why Sara would ask her such an intimate and personal question. Yet, where we constantly saw the thirties Sara in pedagogical relationships, we seem to see this nineties child continually trying to establish relationship with adults, and never quite being able to. In her own words, "I get the feeling that I'm doing something wrong," yet the only wrong we can observe her doing is trying to get close to adults who for varying reasons aren't comfortable being close to her.

Since there are no other adults in the film involved in Sara's life, it obviously falls to Miss Minchin to tell her that her father has been reported missing in action. She does this sitting at her desk. The camera shoots down on Sara emphasizing her smallness and helplessness in the face of what she is about to hear. She remains standing behind a high-backed chair while the head

mistress speaks to her. At first Miss Minchin searches for words. "Sara, I'm afraid I have bad news. Your father has . . . your father . . ."

Now, shaking her head, Sara sinks into the chair. "It's been discovered that your father has died," Miss Minchin continues. "It happened in battle several weeks ago. I'm sorry, but that's the reality of the situation and nothing can change it. What's more, the British government has seized all his money." Sara attempts to look at the head mistress but her attention is drawn to a black balloon that floats at about the height of a child toward her.

"What are you looking at?" Miss Minchin demands. The balloon approaches closer, and her voice rises in pitch and volume. "Don't you understand what I'm saying? You're alone in the world." Now the balloon pops as, it appears, Sara's world also breaks apart. Miss Minchin's voice becomes coyly self-righteous. "Unless I decide to keep you. Out of charity." In extreme close-up we see Sara's face, bereft of life. She does not have to bite back words, as her older counterpart did. The unbelievable has happened. Words and stories that have rescued her before do not come. Captain Crewe has told her she can be whatever she believes. He has never helped her with the difficult task of believing, nor told her what to do if she finds she believes in nothing.

As she takes Sara to her new room in the attic, Miss Minchin goes ahead of her, leading her up stairs and through dark and apparently limitless and empty space with a candelabrum held in her hand. Sara follows, carrying a black dress over her arm. As they climb, Miss Minchin informs her that "everything you owned belongs to me," a much more gloating statement than the thirties Miss Minchin's declaration that Sara's things will be sold to pay her father's bills.

Sara will work with Becky, she is told, and if her work is not satisfactory, Miss Minchin will throw her out in the street. The head mistress adds, as if she knows from personal experience, "Believe me, Sara, the streets of this city are not kind to homeless beggars." Again we see the contrast between the thirties Miss Minchin's query, "I hope you appreciate my kindness in not sending you away," and her contemporary's insistence on describing the meanness of the outside world. The former is insistent on social propriety, the latter on frightening a young girl into submission.

As Miss Minchin and Sara enter her new room we are offered no establishing shot, seeing instead a close-up of the girl's stricken face. The minutiae of her responses to misfortune are apparently important for us to witness. From the size and number of these close-ups, it seems we can never witness them often enough or in great enough detail. I ask myself the purpose of this repetition. I feel I am being manipulated, but I am not sure for what purpose. I remind myself that I have chosen the back seat of the theater for a reason.

Miss Minchin looks at Sara's locket. "I could have you arrested for taking this," the woman says. She tears it from Sara's neck, telling her she may keep Emily, but that if there are any more incidents of theft such as this she will report Sara to the police. As Miss Minchin leaves the room she says what her words and body language have implied since Sara came to the school: "Sara Crewe, you're not a princess any more." Instantly the five candles in the candelabrum go out.

We follow Sara's eyes as in close-up she looks to the rafters of the room where pigeons roost and water leaks in from the rain. The fragile protection bestowed on her by her father in the form of the locket is gone. So, now, are the pictures that reminded her of her parents. We watch as Sara finds a piece of chalk, draws a circle on the floor and lies down inside it with her doll and her

candle. The camera now circles above her, rising higher and higher, then moves out the window to show us the turret she's lying in, guarded by gargoyles. It is similar to the turret where the ten-headed Ravana has locked up Princess Sita.

The reason for the insistence of the *mise-en-scène* on Sara's absolute helpless may now be clear. Her mother is dead, her father missing. She has no money, no allies. This child has none of the resilience of her earlier cinematic sisters. Nothing human can save her. A miracle will be required, but Sara will have to suffer further humiliation before it occurs.

Later in the film the head mistress discovers that some of the girls are visiting Sara's room. Miss Minchin becomes enraged and orders them downstairs. Becky will be locked in her room for a day, she says, and Sara will do the work of both girls without breakfast, lunch or supper. Miss Minchin appears to loom over Sara as she says menacingly, "It's time you learned, Sara Crewe, that real life has nothing to do with your little fantasy games. It's a cruel, nasty world out there, and it's our duty to make the best of it. Not to indulge in ridiculous dreams, but to be productive and useful. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

When Sara responds affirmatively Miss Minchin appears satisfied and turns to leave. Sara goes on. "But I don't believe in it." Miss Minchin steps back into the room and looks at her with incredulity.
"Don't tell me you still fancy yourself a princess?" We see her in long shot as she sets down the candelabrum and gestures at the room. "Good God, child. Look around you! Better still, look in the mirror!"
With tears in her eyes Sara tries to defend herself. "I am a princess," she says. "All girls are.. . . . Didn't your father ever tell you that?" She now raises her voice. "Didn't he?"

Miss Minchin looks at Sara as though she has been struck. We see her face in close-up, twisted with emotion. "If I find you up here with any of these girls again," she snarls, "I will throw you out in the street!" She slams the door, locking both Sara and Becky in their rooms. Again in close-up we see her standing outside the door. She touches her face, begins to cry, and then hurries down the stairs.

Later, when she believes Sara to have stolen the expensive clothes, furnishings and food that suddenly appear in her room, Miss Minchin demands, "You stole all this didn't you?" Sara insists that she is not responsible for the transformation of her room, and Miss Minchin declares, "You're nothing but a dirty little thief. It's my job to protect the students at this school from animals like you." Then she calls the police.

Miss Minchin's insistences that, "it's a cruel, nasty world out there," and that Sara is an animal the other children must be protected from seem to come directly from Thomas Hobbes' personal notebook. Her threats to throw Sara out in the street if her behavior is unsatisfactory might have been taken from a Sixteenth Century Puritan tract on parenting. However, John Locke would have decried the personal satisfaction Miss Minchin takes in Sara's suffering. Harsh discipline was imposed on children to control their spirits and bring them to God, not for personal pleasure. Miss Minchin's actions are much more closely related to the sweetness of personal revenge than to any ideology of discipline. Even her thirties counterpart would not have approved of such emotional excess.

SUFFERING AS HUMILIATION

Throughout the film we have watched Sara cinematically humbled and punished. The room she lives in is wet and cold. Pigeons roost in the rafters and their droppings fall on the floor. The mattress on her bed is dirty and sway-backed. Her hair becomes lank, her face thin and dirty. She shivers and hunches against the cold. Frequently we see her in tears, crying for her father. Considering how much more sympathetically her thirties counterpart was treated, I am struck by the loving attention the *mise-en-scène* of this contemporary films directs not toward Sara, but toward her degradation.

When the thirties Sara went out in the streets looking for her father, the streets were non-threatening. For the contemporary Sara, sent out to do marketing errands, they are packed with adults who jostle and threaten her, and children who try to steal the food from her market basket. Often we see only their bodies as together they make up a faceless, menacing mob. Just as Miss Minchin predicted, these streets are not kind and Sara is certainly no longer a little princess. Since it is a title bestowed on her externally rather than one she lives within, it has easily been taken away.

It is a wonder in fact that Sara tries to escape from the school after the Miss Minchin discovers the cushions and clothes and food in her room. Sara's earlier counterpart believed in herself and considered it possible do such a good job of dreaming that the dream came true. This contemporary girl apparently never entertains the idea that she has created the objects in her room. If she believes anything, it seems to be that help, if it exists at all, will come from some source outside the school.

Sustained by that hope she asks Becky to help her throw down a plank and make a walkway between her window and the adjoining one in Mr. Randolph's house where, although she does not realize it, her father is

staying. As she contemplates the need for escape, he rises, dresses, shuts the window against her calls for help and goes downstairs.

Sara's contemporary journey to safety is not the easy undertaking that it was for her thirties counterpart, however. Nor can Becky accompany her. The way is now much too difficult. It is raining on the day of this nineties child's escape. The plank is slippery as she attempts to walk across it. The camera offers dizzying glimpses directly down to the cobblestones far below. Non-diagetic music becomes insistent and suspenseful. Again, there is a heightened sense of Sara's danger. If she falls from this height, she will certainly die.

Tension builds as the plank begins to vibrate and Sara falls off, catching onto the stone ledge of the house and finally pulling herself up again with super-human effort. There is no one waiting for her in the window of Mr. Randolph's house. She pulls herself inside and then, not stopping to consider how she's actually rescued herself, becomes a shivering, helpless victim again.

Rescue as Surrender

The thirties Sara searched for her father until she finally found him in the hospital. She reminded him that she had never believed he was dead. When it became clear that he didn't recognize her, she became increasingly insistent until he finally remembered who she was. The restoring of his memory appeared to be the result of her loyalty and persistence: the culmination of daily enactments of faith in her relationship with her father and in their future together. In contrast the reunion of the nineties Sara and her father plays out quite differently.

Having escaped from the school to Mr. Randolph's house, Sara runs downstairs and hides in his study. Captain Crewe, his sight restored but his memory still absent, is sitting in the room. "Who's there?" he asks, peering out from an over-stuffed chair. Sara responds by curling up into a frightened ball and crying. He walks toward her. "What is it? Why are you crying? Please tell me. I won't hurt you."

Sara remains huddled up on the floor whimpering and does not look up. She whispers her name. Captain Crewe repeats, "Sara." Finally she looks at him. Strangely, she has not recognized her father's voice until she hears him say her name. She stands and runs toward him. "Papa!" she cries frantically. "Don't you know me? You've got to remember me. You've got to remember me!" He backs away from her, shaking his head. Sara becomes increasingly strident and insistent. Mr. Randolph hears her and comes into the room with Miss Minchin, who is now in the house with the police. "Does this child have a father?" he asks her. Although she clearly recognizes Captain Crewe, Miss Minchin shakes her head

The police pull Sara away from her father, who stands dazed and cowering as though he has been attacked. "I'm sorry," he says. "I'm sorry." Sara is dragged out into the street, still screaming for him. Just as she is about to be carried away in the police car, Ram Dass stands in front of Captain Crewe, looking directly into his eyes as earlier he looked into Sara's. Captain Crewe pauses, then turns and runs out into the street calling to his now remembered daughter.

In long shot we see her running toward him and jumping up to hug him. She wraps her legs around him as they embrace in the middle of the street. He weeps, telling her he loves her over and over again while rain falls and the camera pans around them. A daughter who only knows her father when he

says her name - a father who is able to recognize his daughter only when a figure of magic clears his mind. It is fortunate that Ram Dass is present in their lives.

Still it is a confusing moment for viewers, as it may well be for Sara. Captain Crewe hasn't been comfortable in close proximity to her before this. In fact considerable cinematic evidence has indicated that it would be better if they were separated. Nor has he been able to live up to his promise to send Sara hugs through Emily, the doll. He would not even have recognized his daughter without Ram Dass' magical intervention and yet here they are, locked together in an embrace as intense and intimate as two lovers. Captain Crewe sobs over and over again that he loves Sara, while the camera offers us first his face and then hers in close-up. Whatever he and his daughter have lacked in terms of intimacy, theirs is certainly a relationship filled with emotion.

RAM DASS AS MAGIC FATHER

It is not quite accurate to say that Sara has no relational support in her cinematic world. She does have a relationship of sorts with the mysterious Ram Dass. He is quite different than Captain Crewe in his positioning toward her, however. After her father is reported missing and she becomes a servant at the school, Sara encounters Ram Dass for the first time, although as viewers, we have already seen him several times – on the ship and in the street outside Randolph's house.

As Sara returns home from an errand, a wind suddenly gusts her thin shawl away from her and drops it at Ram Dass' feet, where she goes to retrieve it. The camera reveals him to us slowly from Sara's point of view, traveling from his feet up to his face. In long shot we see Sara and Ram Dass standing

opposite each other and looking directly into each other's eyes for some time. Both seem to be completely comfortable with the oppositional nature of this gaze.

Sara had begun to believe that her stories were just 'make-believe' and that magic did not exist. After she encounters Ram Dass in the street, however, she talks to Becky about India again. The air there is so hot, she says, you can almost taste it. As she goes on to describe the "only place that stirs the imagination," the camera reveals Sara and Becky wearing white party dresses and standing on the same Buddha's head we saw early in the film. They are solemn now, staring off into space. As the camera pans around them, we can observe that Sara's childlike wildness is completely gone, replaced by an almost mask-like seriousness.

The doors to this contemporary Sara's attic room open inward, not outward to the world as they did for her thirties counterpart. Sometime during the night they burst open. She wakes, and walks to the opening where cold air and snow stream in. Directly across from her, Ram Dass stands on a balcony opening out from a room in Mr. Randolph's house. He throws up his arms to the sound of sitar music. She also throws up her arms and begins to whirl and dance, bowing to him as he bows to her.

Sara's rescue has begun. Obviously she receives renewed energy from this experience. The next day she smiles at her work and even plays a prank on Miss Minchin. From her interactions with Ram Dass she finds the courage to look forward to her day without fear. Yet he is not a figure of flesh and blood. The transformation he brings about in her life occurs independently of her own planning or preparation for it.[6] It takes place in the quick time of magic, not the slow-moving, relational time of the pedagogical. The presence of Ram Dass in Sara's life makes parenting seem unwieldy and absurd. It rationalizes its

absence by announcing the failure of the father-daughter relationship. With that announcement, Sara's pedagogical abandonment is now not only legitimized but blessed.

A Feels Wrong Ending

When the thirties Sara saluted Queen Victoria in mid-close-up at the end of the film, there was a certain sense of closure to the narrative, however contrived it might seem to us today. Sara had found her father: she had in fact never really lost him. Miss Rose and Geoffrey were reunited. Bertie seemed happy working with the troops. Miss Minchin's fortune had taken a turn for the worst, but she was not worthy of consideration. No other threads were left dangling, since no other elements in their movie lives had been considered.

At the end of the nineties film, Captain Crewe waits in the street beside a cab. Some time has passed because the name on the school now reads, 'Randolph's School for Girls.' In long shot we see Sara and Becky coming out the door of the school. They are both stylishly and expensively dressed in white. They walk down the stairs with much the same expression as they had in the dream sequence when they stood on the head of the fallen Buddha. They are, in other words, no longer wild children, but young ladies poised on the threshold of adolescence.

Girls from the school clamor around them as they step down onto the sidewalk. "I have a surprise for you," Sara says. She holds out her doll to Lottie and tells her that whenever the girls miss her they should hug the doll, who will get a message to Sara. She'll return the hug right away. Sara is affectless and self-contained as she speaks. Where she once questioned rules, it now appears she is content to quote them, even when they have not

proven true in her experience. Not once in her movie life did Sara speak to Emily and find reassurance while her father was gone. But events in this movie have generally taught Sara not to believe in her own experience whereas the life-experience of the thirties Sara verified her own perceptions.

As in the thirties film, there are no obvious threads left dangling in this contemporary version of the Sara Crewe narrative. Sara takes Becky back to India, which may ease the strain of living intimately with her father. Becky may even be the chaperone the *mise-en-scène* has consistently suggested father and daughter need, although it is a heavy responsibility for a young girl. Miss Minchin loses the school and is forced to work for a young chimney sweep who formerly did work for her.

Still, the ending of this movie leaves much unresolved. In her letter to her father Sara wrote, "I get the feeling I've done something wrong." By the end of the film she appears to be doing everything right and perhaps she has stopped wondering about how she might have caused the circumstances that almost overwhelmed her. The question, however, is should we?

What is the harm in this nineties child that requires her to be punished and humiliated so much more graphically than her thirties progenitor? What harm is there in her suffering being offered to viewers as entertainment? Why does the *mise-en-scène* insist on placing her in an environment where she is threatened and overwhelmed, and where her resources will clearly not be enough to save her? And why, in all the frames that occupy a ninety-seven minute film at twenty-four frames-per-second, is she not able to experience even one moment with a flesh and blood adult who offers her security and pedagogical support?

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[1] Throughout the film Sara visits and revisits the story she introduces when the film opens. It appears to be a version of the Ramayana, which tells of Prince Rama, fourth incarnation of

Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation, and his fight to rescue his wife, Princess Sita, from the ten-headed king of Sri Lanka, Ravana. Differences in her story and the actual Ramayana will not be considered, since they do not seem relevant to this study.

[2] See Edwards (1988), p. 363.

[3] Most recently in *101 Dalmations* (1996), Cruella Daville was the black-haired women with the white stripe in her hair.

[4] Maltby (1995), p. 218. Maltby argues that *Psycho* changed the nature of Hollywood film space forever. Never before had horror been allowed into the privacy of the bedroom or bathroom. After that, audiences knew that all screen space could be violated.

[5] Elsaesser (1992). Douglas Sirk, for example, portrayed his fifties heroines trapped behind windows in films like *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), and *Written on the Wind*, (1957) and *Imitation of Life* (1959). The use of that style here clearly accents Sara's powerlessness and imprisonment. It also invites us to equate her with Rama's captured lover, Princess Sita.

[6] See Chapter Five, "Magic as Pedagogy" for a longer discussion of this issue.

Chapter Five

PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS

As I watch the two versions of the Sara Crewe narrative it is clear to me that while both movie children have what might be called the appearance of innocence, their experiences are not at all the same. A life-world of difference is already implied in the titles of the two movies they appear in. Burnett, we remember, originally called her work *Sara Crewe, or What Happened at Miss Minchin's.* Later she retitled it, *A Little Princess.* The reason for her change is not recorded, nor is the rationale for Twentieth Century Fox's title change to *The Little Princess,* or Warner Brother's reclaiming of *A Little Princess.* The implications of these changes, however, seem worth reflection.

FROM UNIQUENESS TO GUILT

There is uniqueness in being the little princess, because the title implies there is only one. In the cinematic world of the 1939 film that little princess is Sara Crewe and no other. The particularity of her title does not stem from any specific event, but from the fact that her father recognizes her as such, as do the other adults who come to know and love her, and champion her uniqueness. Their relationship with her is highly personal. It emerges somewhat spontaneously and exists outside its ability to be reduced to something else.[1] It has as its goal her ability to participate in the culture with more and more self-responsibility.

The 1995 title, *A Little Princess*, on the other hand, implies to me that Sara is one princess among many. At first glance the title change seems positive enough, even democratic. All girls probably do have the potential to be princesses to someone who claims them as unquestionably important, but

there is no one in the film for whom Sara can function in that way. Becoming merely one little princess among many makes her ordinary rather than unique.

When Sara shares with her father Maya's belief that all girls have the right to be princesses, he defers to the woman's wisdom. Further, he tells Sara she can be whatever she believes. While the thirties Captain Crewe made no such high-sounding statements, his way of being with Sara expressed what his words did not necessarily articulate. In a sense all the important adults in Sara's life acted as her tutors, allowing her to take from their beliefs about her so that she could make them her own.[2]

As a figure of some ambivalence, the nineties Captain Crewe has not parallel beliefs or consciousness to offer his daughter. Certainly he has no advice about what she should do if the time comes when like him she can find nothing to believe. His final statement that she "is and always will be *his* little princess," in no way gives her the same gift of uniqueness the thirties Sara was given by her father. It merely marks her as a possession, like the special doll from France, her pretty clothes or her mother's locket. And possessions, as we know, can be discarded or left behind.

Within her circle of pedagogical relationships, the thirties Sara was esteemed and estimable: 'The Little Princess.' Although her uniqueness attracted the attention of many adults, however, only the mercenary Miss Minchin gazed at her with anything other than pedagogical eyes. Nothing about Sara's specialness posed a threat to her. With Miss Minchin her wealth and social standing actually afforded her a degree of protection. We see how composed she is when she appears in a frame with her father, or Bertie or even the unknown Colonel at the hospital. We see how safe and confident she is when she walks the streets of London alone at night.

As one princess out of many candidates, however, we see shot after shot of the nineties Sara as alone and vulnerable rather than unique. Certainly the more contemporary filming and editing techniques used in the movie may create this effect. However, representing Sara and her father together through cross-cutting their single and oppositional images still creates for me a vague sense of discomfort, even of wrongness about their relationship. Instead of the side-by-side posture of togetherness the camera repeatedly offered in the long takes of the thirties film, father and daughter are now alone while only seeming to be together.

When they do appear together in long shots, Captain Crewe consistently moves away from Sara so that she follows him. Why is he always walking away from her? Why is he the first to avert his eyes? He holds Sara on his lap before he leaves the school, just as his earlier counterpart held his daughter. But unlike the thirties Captain Crewe, this contemporary father seems agitated by his daughter's attention. Perhaps because he is more withdrawn from her, she is bolder than the thirties Sara with him, gazing at him intensely and repeatedly stroking his face.

It may be because of his agitation that I also feel uncomfortable at this moment. It may be because of her desperate need to make contact. In either case I want to look away from the glossy, intensely enlarged images of their faces. I know I am only watching a reel father and daughter saying good-bye and yet there is an almost scopophobic quality to my presence. I feel as though I am peeking in through some stranger's bedroom window. It may be that all film watching is an act of voyeurism that we continually negotiate by justifying our position as spectators.[3] In that sense my watching of the film at all makes me complicit in the guilt that seems to be associated with father and daughter. Perhaps that is why I feel relief when Captain Crewe leaves.

Later Sara writes to her father about her difficulties at school. "I get the feeling I'm doing something wrong," she says. As viewer I have begun to have an intangible sense of her culpability as well. By her presence she seems to have made her father uncomfortable. Perhaps she is responsible for his ambivalence. She challenges Miss Minchin's authority at school, flaunting rules without giving thought to the consequences. Perhaps she is the agent of her own distress. If she is not loved or supported by anybody, perhaps it is her own fault.

It surprises me to find I am thinking in this way. I remind myself that from its earliest days Hollywood movies have seduced viewers into emotional stance taking. While the judgmental position I have taken toward Sara is momentary for me, it still violates my intention in seeing the film. Hollywood's vision of children may not be pedagogical, but I think mine ought to be.

Undermining Pedagogical Relationships

Many adults positioned themselves *with* the thirties Sara Crewe, indicating in many different ways their willingness to be co-participants with her in a normative relationship focussing on her growth and well-being in an "alienating world." All these relationships contributed to her welfare in three critical areas: security, reliability and continuity.[4]

It is because of the relational security the thirties Sara feels with her father that she has developed such a strong sense of own-ness or self. She is certain she will know him when he returns no matter how much he has changed because she is sure of her own perceptions. Her first words to her father after she finds him are to tell him that she never believed he was dead. That declaration is, in a sense, a verification of the rightness of her own intuition. We can hear in it how strongly she believes in herself.

Further, it is because her father has always been a reliable part of her life that she knows he will keep his promise to return. Not long after he leaves Sara at the school, Captain Crewe sends her a letter telling her that he'll be thinking of her at exactly two o'clock on her birthday. He asks her to think of him at that time as well, so that even though they are separated, in a sense they can still be together. Sara believes she feels his presence at this moment, even though just after two o'clock on her birthday Miss Rose tells her Captain Crewe is missing. Had she not believed so strongly in her father's promise, she might not have searched for him, found him and called him back from amnesia to their shared life.

Ultimately, because of the continuity created in her life by all these factors, Sara is able to face hardship and deprivation with faith in the future and trust in other adults that calls forth trust in them. Unlike Ram Dass, Sara's alchemical 'power' is not magical at all, but the result of a network of empowering pedagogical relationships.

The possibility of a world where such relationships exist may appear as much like a fairy tale to our contemporary eyes and ears as the story of Rama and Sita. We are more accustomed to movie families where adults are narratively and cinematically absent or ineffective. The nineties Captain Crewe may love his daughter very much and want her to be well in his absence, but he appears somehow absent even when he is physically present. In this he contrasts sharply with the thirties Captain Crewe who through the relationship he establishes with his daughter is able to be present to her, even when he is physically absent. His presence 'calls' her to stay active and alert while he is away, because he may return at any time.

Yet underestimating the way in which the *mise-en-scène* of *A Little Princess* works against the pedagogical in Captain Crewe and Sara's relationship would

be a mistake. It is in fact impossible for the contemporary father to relate to his daughter with pedagogical intent when the very essence of the *mise-en-scène* insists that they be uncomfortable in each other's presence. Captain Crewe makes promises to his daughter that he obviously means to keep. "We'll write everyday," he says, assuring her that when she hugs the doll, Emily, she will get a hug from him in return. Yet the only visible letter written in this nineties film is from Sara to her father. And while there is ample evidence of Captain Crewe's inability to be comfortable and affectionate in his daughter's presence, at no time does Emily appear to transfer his love to Sara.

The thirties Captain Crewe was allowed by the *mise-en-scène* to keep his promise and 'be with' Sara on her birthday. In contrast, at the very moment when the nineties Sara calls out for help from her room in Miss Minchin's house, her father hears her voice and closes the window against it. The *mise-en-scène* of this contemporary film offers a rationale for the fact that promises made by a father to a child cannot and therefore need not be kept. This is a significant, normative change. Rather than offering viewers examples of pedagogical relationships, this nineties films makes their failure the subject of an evening's entertainment.

Magic Replaces Pedagogy

If we have any feeling at all for the plight of the contemporary Sara, we have to be relieved that magic is alive and at work in her cinematic life-world. The painstakingly created circle of pedagogical relationships that protected her predecessor from destruction and allowed her to develop the strength to call her father back to their shared present no longer exists. Sara's peers have no more power against Miss Minchin than Sara does. Certainly none of them can prevail against the problems of the world outside the school. What this nineties Sara apparently needs and appears to get is an encounter with a

magical figure who can intervene in her behalf. The *mise-en-scène* supplies this in the figure of Ram Dass.

He is an attractive character, mystical yet more present to her in some senses than her father has been. He returns Sara's gaze, and does not feel confused or threatened by it. His proximity to her and apparent knowledge of her circumstances infuse her with renewed energy and fill a void in her life. It is after she meets Ram Dass that we see her laughing and telling her story again, although problematically there is still no place for her in its narrative. Ram Dass' entrance into the film provides mystery and visual spectacle, but it is not pedagogical. He is a non-relational figure of numinous encounter.

While encounters between an adult and a child may be pedagogical in nature, to be so requires that they both 'come toward' each other in a way that represents the will of both persons.[5] Reciprocity is contained in pedagogical encounter. So is responsibility. As a teacher, parent and grandparent I know that I cannot engage children beyond their willingness to engage me and what I have to offer. Our work together is a loving and relational struggle that is slower than magic in whatever transformations it accomplishes. And yet I cannot turn away from it. In that sense my responsibility is greater than that of the children I am in pedagogical relationship with. Because of that commitment, our interaction is as likely to change me as it is to change the child.

The relational richness in the thirties Sara's life helped to counterbalance the senseless and, from her point of view, irrational disappearance of her father and her whole way of life. Ram Dass' replacement of flesh and blood adults in Sara's life attempts to use the irrational to balance the irrational. It is problematic for me for other reasons as well. I am especially concerned by

the fact that his presence in the narrative seems to exist entirely outside her need and does nothing to make her appear more resourceful to herself.

When she falls from the plank spanning Miss Minchin's school and Mr. Randolph's house and clings for her life to a narrow, brick ledge, she is as much a candidate for rescue as the beleaguered heroine in any D. W. Griffith melodrama. However, the magical Ram Dass is not present to save her. He is downstairs serving brandy to Mr. Randolph and her father and makes no effort to respond to or be responsible in the face of her distress. If not for her own strength, it appears Sara would have fallen to her death. Instead she pulls herself up the side of an impossibly steep building to the safety of an open window. No one is there to help her realize what she has done, however, and despite her act of self-rescue, she becomes helpless again in her father's presence.

Her thirties predecessor believed she might have created the food and clothes and new furnishings in her room herself by skillful dreaming. The nineties Sara *knows* her dreams don't come true. Nor can she compel her father to acknowledge who she is as the thirties Sara did. In a sense he has never responded to her call to him, so there is no way that he can re-call her.[6] It appears that he wants to, but he cannot. While Ram Dass did not help the daughter in distress, he now clears the father's mind and helps him recognize his daughter. In so doing he brings about a solution to the film's narrative predicament, but does nothing to build or restore Sara's faith in herself.

No doubt she and her father are both shaken by what they have experienced, but the *mise-en-scène* returns them to the same troubled, quasi-incestuous relationship. Ram Dass, uncommitted and apparently untouched by anything that has happened, does not return to India with them. None of the narrative events in the film orient Sara toward an independent and self-fulfilling future.

Like Hollywood film itself, magic shows no pedagogical commitment. It touches Sara's life, but leaves her as she always was: one princess among many, vulnerable, unclaimed and alone.

NARRATIVE AS A SEARCH FOR RELATIONSHIP

A young girl who had been in therapy for a long time eventually recovered from autism. Reflecting on what makes good parents, she said that when a child is in despair, good parents hope for her.[7] We have seen how Miss Rose and Bertie played this part in the thirties Sara's life. Her nineties counterpart, however, has no such support. How, we wonder, can a ten-year-old girl, suddenly unchampioned and alone in the world survive? Where will she turn for hope and support? It appears she turns to the comfort of a mythological tale.

Some psychologists theorize that fairy tales begin where, without the help of the story itself, a child might remain stuck in her life: neglected, rejected and degraded.[8] Through thought processes different than those used by adults, she 'stories' herself into a given narrative and begins to believe that her life and the life of the suffering person in the story are the same. In this way she overcomes hopelessness by believing that she will succeed like her alter ego in the story, that her own trials will acquire meaning in that way, and that evil forces will be overcome.

In choosing to live out certain stories, of course, children leave many other stories unlived and unexplored.[9] When Sara focuses on Rama's rescue of Princess Sita, she ignores narratives in which rescue is not necessary because relational shelter and safety already exist. She also ignores tales of heroism in which she might take an active part, choosing instead to place her fate in the hands of those stronger than she is. But far worse than identifying herself with a story which requires victims in order for rescue to be carried out,

Sara chooses to tell and live within a story from whose text she as a child has been excised.

It is difficult for me to see how she can find sustenance through belief in a world in which she does not exist, any more than she can in the presence of her father's ambivalence. However, her revisiting of the Rama and Sita narrative may be viewed as an attempt at the establishment of relationship. Through story she "beckon[s] towards somebody rather than anybody."[10] The nineties Sara returns to the Rama and Sita story as tenaciously as the thirties Sara returned again and again to the search for her father. It is a tragedy that no human calls to this contemporary girl as strongly as the demon-ridden narrative of Rama and Sita.

Sara's voice began the film, narrating the Rama and Sita story in voice-over on a darkened screen. An Iris-out shot then allowed us to watch the lovers as she narrated. *A Little Princess* also ends with an iris-in shot, this time without narration, showing Sara, her father and Becky riding away from the school in a carriage. Presumably they are going back to India. Iris shots developed as a technique for focussing attention on certain aspects of a silent film storyline. I am not sure what I am to conclude from the use of that technique here.

On one level it appears that the entire movie has been a fairy tale, but the feeling that issues related to contemporary fathers and daughters are really not resolvable persists for me after I leave the theater. Where love and commitment between them made it possible to resolve problems in the thirties, in the nineties these same attributes seem messy and suspect and have become problems on their own. The pedagogical atmosphere of both the film and of Sara's relationship to her father has been replaced by an aura of ambivalence. She seems vulnerable and at risk. While I do not begrudge

the momentary assistance she receives from magic, I grieve that there is nothing pedagogical to take its place in her life.

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[1] Van Manen (1984), p. 143. The author quotes the work of H. Nohl who describes pedagogical relationships as "intensely experienced."

[2] Bruner (1986), p. 76. Here I am revisiting Bruner's discussion of Lev Vygotsky's work. His theory of tutoring as a "loan of consciousness" from one more able to one less able seems to me to apply beyond the process of language acquisition to relational issues.

[3] Sontag (1989), p. 7. The author claims that the act of 'taking' a photographic image from a human being is in itself an act of aggression. Watching those images makes viewers somehow complicit in the act.

[4] Langeveld (1975), p. 11. Dr. Max van Manen recounts a taped, personal communication with M.J. Langeveld in which the Dutch pedagogical phenomenologist said that the important pedagogical question to be asked is "How can I help bring a child to humanness in a world which has alienated itself from children – a world which upon entering is an alienating world."

[5] Bollnow (1972), pp. 303 – 309. Bollnow speaks of pedagogical encounter taking place between two adults. I believe, however, that it also applies in this context, given willingness on the part of the child, and responsibility on the part of the adult.

[6] Van Manen (1982), pp. 288-289. The author refers to pedagogy as an adult being called upon by a child. In response the adult re-calls, "you my child belong to me," and "I belong to you."

[7] Bettleheim (1976), p. 125.

[8] Ibid., pp. 57-73. Bettleheim presents a psychological argument for the fairy tale as a narrative device that starts with a real problem, and helps the child see how a higher clarity can emerge to make sense of personal struggles.

[9] Carter (1993), p. 5. Carter reminds us that in approaching any story we need to be mindful of what the story captures, and what the story leaves out.

[10] Ibid. Emphasis added.

CONCLUSION

The sum total of a century of reel kids' images has offered us no strikingly new or more child-centered way of looking at children. I see representations of everything my ancestors believed or felt about them in movies or videos today. My many-times-distant-grandmother, Elizabeth Hopkins, gave birth to a boy named Oceanus while onboard the Mayflower. Whatever feelings she had for that infant must have been held tightly in check by the need to see him purged of his inner demons - demons probably not unlike those that plagued Regan in *The Exorcist* (1973) or the four girls in the *The Craft* (1996). Perhaps Elizabeth feared that undisciplined, her son might give in to animalistic behavior like the protagonist of the 1957 film, *I Was A Teenage Werewolf,* or some of his descendants.

Those of my ancestors who emigrated from Northern Europe brought with them a strict, Lockean determination to fill their children's minds with pre-approved knowledge and a willingness to follow societal rules as long as their personal and religious freedom was not encroached upon. Films, especially of the thirties and forties, are filled with their cinematic progeny. Even My paternal grandfather, an habitual tobacco chewer at the age of ten was branded dangerous by the country schoolteacher who awoke his rage when she tried to make him stop. If he was less destructive than the revenging children-grown-to-men in the 1996 film *Sleepers*, his reasons for violence were perhaps less severe. And my maternal grandmother's Rousseauistic love children, having appeared unrepressed in movies for almost a century, are still very much alive in films like *Baby Geniuses* (1999).

While it appears that Hollywood films love these babies and children for their fresh, irrepressible behavior, they just as frequently gaze at them with the minimizing and even threatening gaze Seventeenth Century Puritans directed

toward their offspring. Sometimes I see the alterations Locke and his Eighteenth Century followers made in that gaze, and sometimes I do not. At any rate, images of happy, secure children will never mediate for me the overwhelming ambivalence and even animosity that seems to reside in the gaze Hollywood directs toward its young.[1]

Comparing the life of the contemporary Sara Crewe to that of girls I know, I become increasingly interested in the relationship that exists between reel kids and their off-screen counterparts. Do the thousands of frames of humiliation, abuse and loneliness comprising Sara's cinematic life have some parallel in the lives of our 'real' children? Are they also alienated and self-doubting? Are the circles that provide them with affirmation and direction in their lives also exclusive of pedagogical relationships and composed solely of peers? Do real kids feel their parents and teachers are as absent and useless as the images of them we see in film? Describers of popular culture generally answer in the affirmative to these questions.[2]

The pedagogical circle that nurtured the thirties Sara Crewe is breaking apart, in both reel and real worlds. The vulnerability of girls only a few years older than she was to depression, substance abuse and suicide is well documented.[3] Alarmingly, teenagers and pre-teenagers are turning away from even functional, caring families in order to find acceptance in a media-dominated, consumer-oriented culture that peddles sophistication to them and calls it independence. The right labels on clothes, the right lipstick and hair color, the right kind of bike or car or in-line skates can make the difference between social acceptance and ostracism.[4] Where parents once played the role of disseminators of culture, they now find they must work against cultural influences. Yet they have diminished status in their children's eyes. Some say they feel abandoned by their children.

Can it be merely coincidental that Hollywood narrative films throughout this century have increasingly favored scenarios in which adults are either useless, helpless or absent from children's lives, at the same time that brutalized and sexualized images of children have become relatively common? Personally, I have no doubt that movie images shape the perception of off-screen children and adults in some way – both toward each other and toward themselves. The correspondence of 'real' and 'reel' worlds needs to be explored.

At the same time contemporary film viewers need to constantly examine the images of children and adults films offer us. I know many off-screen children who are not enraged or suicidal or destructive. And I know many 'real' adults who work at being pedagogically present and effective in their children's lives. I wonder why we don't see more reel people like them?

Film has great power to indoctrinate, especially because the invisible is as important as the visible in that medium. The Hollywood movie industry supported the entrance of the United States into World War II with films like *Casablanca* (1942). Even *The Little Princess* (1939) can be read as a pre-World War II film reassuring audiences that when fathers go away to war they come back again and everything is alright. Hollywood films seem to have been involved in another war since the fifties, however - one aimed at the destruction of the family as a unit of decision-making, and the raising up of teenagers as unrestricted consumers.[5]

Those of us who feel a strong pedagogical commitment need to become more knowledgeable and resistant film readers. It has been difficult for me to view a film as reel world unfolding, while at the same time trying to maintain the position of one who knows the film isn't real at all and tries to work actively with the images it presents.[6] This is particularly true because the withholding

of certain images in a movie plays as great a part in the meaning we make from the film as their presentation. I now understand how difficult it has been for marginalized people to learn to challenge and interrogate the derogatory images they have seen of themselves in film. It takes effort to see the constructedness of Hollywood film and not make viewing it a process of automatic, visual digestion.[7]

Even watching reel kids thoughtfully and then turning away without response still creates a pedagogical dilemma for me. Along with going to the movies, that turning away has become a ritualized part of my life. I discussed this with the two young girls who live near me, and they assured me I should not be concerned. "They're just movies," they told me. "You're supposed to walk away from them."[8] While I appreciate the succinctness of their observations, their comments feel incomplete to me.

Movies are not just movies. They engage me at some deep level. Sometimes they make me cry or laugh or feel hopeless. I may achieve a measure of separation from myself and a film, but still its images seep into my awareness and my imagination. Is it not possible that seeing reel children physically or psychologically abused and then shrugging off their images makes it easier for me to shrug off images of children I see in the papers or on television whose suffering is not simulated? Without intending to I can become a kind of non-reflective commuter between cinematic space and the physical and emotional locatedness of my life. In the past I have convinced myself that feeling concerned about a child's vulnerability or crying a little about it was a satisfactory substitute for doing something to change the condition that caused it. In fact, all I have done is sit in a comfortable seat surrounded by darkness and let the film dream a resolution for me.

Of course it would be naïve to think that I can take action about every incidence of spiritual or physical child abuse I see in a film. There are too many and I have no alchemical power at all. But watching a film with pedagogical vision can give me greater perspective into the life-experience of the children with whom I *am* in relational contact. And from Captain Crewe or Bertie or Rose's behavior with Sara I can see how I might respond more effectively to their vulnerability or their need for independence. I can see these things, that is, if films offer images of people like them to me.

Fewer and fewer of these relationships are visible in contemporary Hollywood films, however, and I doubt that I will become a filmmaker myself. Still, it seems I have several courses of action open to me. I can actively promote the inclusion of media literacy skills in pre- and post-secondary education. I can interrogate the anti-pedagogical images I see in mainstream film, voicing my resistance when the opportunity arises. I can also attempt to create opportunities to share my awareness of Hollywood's anti-pedagogical stance with interested teachers and parents. The real point of reflection, after all is the ability to embody what we know. For me, reclaiming and reframing the pedagogical in my own vision is the beginning of that embodiment.

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[1] See Postman (1994), ix. In the preface to this newest edition of his book, Postman comments that, "American culture is hostile to the idea of childhood." Since that culture is strongly influenced by movies, as well as vice versa, my experience as a viewer makes me concur with his assessment.

[2] See Bly (1996), pp. 38-41, as well as Best (1994), Louv (1990), Pipher (1994) and Orenstein (1994) on this general topic.

[3] Pipher (1994), p. 19 – 26, 82, 190.

[4] Ibid., pp. 39 and 65-68. Some parents now say they feel abandoned by their children. The author also asserts, however that, "What girls need to weather the emotional storm of adolescence is the support of a family that offers them a balance between acceptance of their growing need for individuality and some consistent boundaries for their exploration." See also Orenstein (1994), Chapter Ten.

[5] Ibid., p. 202. According to Pipher, adulthood in North American culture is now defined by being old enough to consume harmful chemicals, have sex and spend money.

[6] Booth (1988), pp. 428 – 432. Booth asserts that all listeners [and I would assert viewers] maintain at least three roles: that of immediate believer, that of one who knows better than to believe, and that of flesh and blood reader, who lives outside the narrative but attempts to work with it.

[7] I now understand how difficult it has been for marginalized people to learn to challenge derogatory images they have seen of themselves in film. See Hooks (1992) for an interesting discussion of black women's struggle to reclaim their images by developing oppositional readings to film and television texts.

[8] Carpenter (1973), p. 6. It seems not too long ago that we looked at characters in stories we read and said how they reminded us of a certain person we knew. Now we look at people we meet and try to fit them to images we see in film and television. Carpenter attributes this reversal to changes in the importance of textual literacy.

THESES

1. Mainstream Hollywood filmmakers privilege the appearance of reality over the constructed nature of their films, purposefully involving viewers unreflectively in cinematic action. They are powerful social indoctrinators.

2. Mainstream Hollywood films perpetuate historical, often reprehensible images of children as demons, monsters, threats to society, and tempters as well as servants and saviors of adults. The gaze these films direct toward children is ambivalent at best, and hostile at its worst. It is anti-pedagogical.

3. The structure of Hollywood melodramas often requires putting children (or other victims) into critical and dangerous situations in order for them to be rescued. In so doing they create the sense that it is acceptable to be entertained by the distress of these characters.

4. Cinematic presentations of reel kids make statements about the nature of children and their needs and capabilities that shape our pedagogical perceptions of off-screen children.

5. Adults who are pedagogically active in children's lives are increasingly absent in Hollywood film, while non-normative relationships between reel children and reel adults are increasingly visible. Isolation and estrangement are becoming the norm in these cinematic relationships.

6. The 'unseen' in film is as significant as the 'seen.'

7. Media literacy is becoming more important than textual literacy. Pedagogically sensitive adults need to become resistive readers of film.

8. The line between children and adults in Hollywood film has never been clearly defined. Where Brugel's children looked like little adults, Hollywood films have had and still retain a fondness for adults who look and act like children.

9. In many contemporary films magic appears to fill the narrative gap that was filled by pedagogical relationships in earlier films, or by children's alchemical abilities.

10. The relationship between the experiences of children in film and in the off-screen world needs to be explored further. This exploration should be

based, not on 'scientific' criteria, but on the experiences of children and adults watching film both in the moment, and over time.

11. Relationships between adults as pedagogically inadequate and the turning away of off-screen adolescents from their families is also a possible topic for research.

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CINEMATIC GLOSSARY

Close-ups: A close-up focuses on a human face. A medium close-up shows the face and torso of a human subject from the chest up. Such shots were used as early as the first decade in the century to bring an atmosphere of intimacy to a movie and involve audiences in the joys and sorrows of movie characters. D. W. Griffith firmly established the technique in 1915 with *Birth of a Nation*. Extreme close-ups developed later in the history of cinematography. They show the face in such magnification that it cannot fit entirely into the frame.

Cross-Cutting: Editing that alternates shots of two or more lines of action going on in different places, usually simultaneously.

Deep Focus: A technique that exploits depth of field to render subjects near the camera lens and far away with equal clarity and permits the composition of the image in depth.

Dissolve: The dissolve or lap dissolve is a technique that provides a transition from one scene or location to another by superimposing a fade-out from one shot over a fade-in from another.

Establishing Shots: Establishing shots are exterior medium or long shots that give audiences visual information about dramatic space.

Film Genre: A system of codes, conventions and visual styles enabling viewers to quickly determine what kind of narrative they are watching. Also a kind of "contract" between filmmakers and audiences.

Frame: A frame is the single image of one shot on a celluloid strip, banded in black. Sound film runs through the camera at 24 frames-per-second (fps). Each frame is a separate still image that we perceive as moving because of persistence of vision and the phi phenomenon.

Iris Shot: Iris shots involve circular contracting [iris-in shots] or expanding [iris-out shots] lens-masking devices that draw our attention to an area of the frame that has symbolic or narrative visual importance. Iris shots were used extensively in early silent film as attention-focussing devices.

Long Shot: A long shot shows a subject's entire figure, plus a good deal of background. A medium long shot shows at least three-fourths of the human subject's figure.

Extreme long shots can be panoramic – taken from as far away as half a mile.

Long Take: [Also called the sequence shot.] A single, unbroken shot, moving or stationary, which describes a complex action that might otherwise be represented through montage. It is essential to *mise-en-scène* aesthetics.

Medium Shot: A medium shot shows the human subject from the waist up.

Mise-en-scène: A French word that means, "putting in the scene." All the elements in front of the camera to be photographed, including setting, props, lighting, costumes, make up and figure movement are part of the *mise-en-scène*. It is not an editing term, but a look at what's going on in the frame.

Montage: Montage means "cutting," in its simplest sense. It involves the way separate shots are edited together.

Narrative: In cinematic terms, a chain of events linked by cause-effect relationships, occurring in time and space.

Shot: The shot is an uninterrupted run of the camera, or an unedited piece of film of any length. It's the basic unit of filmmaking. A shot may last from a second up to ten minutes, which is the maximum amount of film that can be stored in a film cartridge or magazine.

Shot/Reverse Shot: Two shots edited together, alternating characters usually in a conversation situation. One character will be framed looking left, one looking right, giving them the appearance of talking together.

Tracking Shot: In contrast to more standard Hollywood filmmaking which relies on montage editing to develop scenes, tracking shots allow the camera to move in one long, continuous take around a subject of interest. These takes can be shot from the ground, or as aerial or crane shots.

FILMOGRAPHY*

by Decades

The Adventures of Dolly (1908)
Children of the Tenements: Song of the Shirt (1908)
Father and Drunkard (1908)
The Great Train Robbery (1904)

Birth Control (1917)
Child of the Ghetto (1910)
The Hand that Rocks the Cradle (1917)
Hoodoo Anne (1916)
Let Katie Do It (1916)
A Poor Little Rich Girl (1917)
Sister of Six (1916)
Tess of the Storm Country (1914)
A Traffic in Souls (1913)
Where Are My Children? (1916)

Just Pals (1921)
The Godless Girl (1929)
The Kid (1924)*
Uncle Tom's Cabin (1927)
Our Gang (1922-1929)*
Topsy and Eva (1928)

A Family Affair (1937)
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever (1939)*
Angels Wash Their Faces (1939)
Angels with Dirty Faces (1938)
Curly Top (1935)*
Baby Take A Bow (1934)*
Boys Town (1938)*
Dead End (1937)*
Gone with the Wind (1938)*
Judge Hardy's Children (1938)
Kid in Hollywood (1933)

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* Since I grew up in the forties and was a teenager in the fifties, I have seen many of these films in theaters. For purposes of research, however, video stores carry some silent films and a great number of films from the thirties on. One night I visited two video stores and found all starred films above available. Any films listed in Maltin (1999) or Connors (1999) can also be ordered.

The Little Princess (1939)*
Little Tough Guys (1938)
Little Tough Guys in Society (1938)
The Littlest Rebel (1936)*
Love Finds Andy Hardy (1938)*
100 Men and A Girl (1937)
One Third of A Nation (1939)
They Made Me A Criminal (1939)*
War Babies (1932)
Wee Willie Winkie (1937)*
The Wizard of Oz (1939)*

Andy Hardy Meets Debutante (1940)*
Andy Hardy's Private Secretary (1941)*
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn (1945)*
The Biscuit Eater (1940)
Black Beauty (1946)*
Centennial Summer (1946)
Courage of Lassie (1946)
I Remember Momma (1948)*
Intruder in the Dust (1949)*
Mildred Pierce (1945)*
My Friend Flicka (1943)*
National Velvet (1943)*
Skudda Hoo! Skudda Hay! (1948)
So Dear to My Heart (1949)
Song of the South (1946)
The Yearling (1946)*

Angels in the Outfield (1951)*
April Love (1957)
Baby Doll (1956)*
Bernadette (1956)
Blackboard Jungle (1955)*
Blood of Dracula (1957)
Blue Denim (1959)
The Bowry Boys Meet the Monster (1954)
Crime in the Streets (1956)
Dangerous Youth (1958)
The Delinquents (1957)
Devil's Hairpin (1957)
Drag Strip Girl (1957)
Dragstrip Riot (1958)

Gidget (1959)*
Hot Cars (1956)
Hot Rod Girl (1956)
Imitation of Life (1959)*
I Was A Teenage Caveman (1959)
I Was a Teenage Frankenstein (1958)
I Was a Teenage Werewolf (1957)*
Juvenile Jungle (1958)
Motorcycle Gang (1957)
Peyton Place (1957)*
Rebel without a Cause (1955)*
Reform School Girl (1957)
Rock All Night (1957)
Running Wild (1955)*
Shane (1953)*
Summer Love (1958)
A Summer Place (1959)*
Teenage Crime Wave (1955)
Teenage Monster (1958)
Teenage Zombies (1957)
Teenagers from Outer Space (1959)
The Shaggy Dog (1959)*
The Wild One (1953)*
Young and Wild (1958)*
The Young Stranger (1957)

All the Way Home (1963)
Beach Party (1963)
Bikini Beach (1964)
The Ghost in the Invisible Bikini (1965)
Halls of Anger (1969)
How to Stuff a Wild Bikini (1965)*
Hud (1963)*
I Was a Teenage Gorilla (1960)
Muscle Beach (1964)
Muscle Beach Party (1964),
Pajama Party (1964)
Raisin in the Sun (1961)*
A Thousand Clowns (1965)*
To Kill A Mockingbird (1961)*
True Grit (1969)*
Up the Down Staircase (1967)*

War Hunt (1962)
West Side Story (1961)*
Wild in the Streets (1968)*

Aaron Loves Angela (1975)
Abby (1974)
American Grafitti (1973)*
The Bad News Bears (1976)*
The Bad News Bears Go to Japan (1978)*
The Bad News Bears in Breaking Training (1977)
Benji (1974)*
Bless the Beasts and the Children (1971)*
Breaking Away (1979)*
Carrie (1976)*
Claudine (1974)
Conrack (1974)
Cooley High (1975)
The Cowboys (1971)
The Culpepper Cattle Company (1972)
Damien: Omen II (1978)*
The Education of Sonny Carson (1974)
The Exorcist (1973)*
Exorcist II: The Heretic (1977)*
Halls of Anger (1970)*
Halloween (1978)*
Kramer vs. Kramer (1978)*
The Last Picture Show (1971)*
The Lords of Flatbush (1974)*
The Omen (1976)*
*Paper Moon (1973)**
Pretty Baby (1978)*
Sounder (1974)*
Star Wars (1977)*
Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974)*

Baby Boom (1987)*
Back to the Future (1985)*
Bustin' Loose (1981)
ET: The Extraterrestrial (1982)*
For Keeps (1988)

Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982)*
Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)*
For Keeps (1988)
Friday the Thirteenth (1980)*
Friday the Thirteenth, Part 2 (1981)*
Friday the Thirteenth, Part 3 (1982)*
Friday the Thirteenth, The Final Chapter (1984)*
Friday the Thirteenth, Part V: A New Beginning (1985)*
Friday the Thirteenth, Part VI: Jason Lives (1986)*
Friday the Thirteenth, Part VII: The New Blood (1988)
Friday the Thirteenth, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan (1989)
Halloween II (1981)*
Halloween III: Season of the Witch (1983)*
Halloween IV: The Return of Michael Myers (1988)*
Halloween 5 (1989)*
Honey, I Shrunk the Kids (1989)*
The Karate Kid (1984)*
The Karate Kid, Part II (1986)*
The Karate Kid, Part III (1989)*
*A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)**
*A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2, Freddy's Revenge (1985)**
*A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors (1987)**
*A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master (1988)**
A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Dream Child (1989
Raising Arizona (1987)*
Return to Oz (1985)
Risky Business (1983)*
She's Having a Baby (1988)*
Sixteen Candles (1984)*
Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2 (1986)*
Three Men and a Baby (1987)*
Willow (1988)*

Angels in the Outfield (1994)*
The Amazing Panda Adventure (1995)*
Andre (1994)*
The Babysitter (1995)*
Blank Check (1994)*
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1992)*
The Craft (1996)*
The Cure (1995)*
The Day My Parents Ran Away (1993)

Dennis the Menace (1993)*
Dragonworld (1994)*
Dunston Checks In (1996)*
Edward Scissorhands (1990)*
Fairy Tale (1997)*
Father's Day (1997)*
Flipper (1996)*
Fly Away Home (1996)*
Foxfire (1996)*
Free Willie (1992)*
Free Willie II (1995)*
Halloween: H20 (1998)*
Harriet the Spy (1996)*
Home Alone (1990)*
Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (1992)*
Home Alone 3 (1998)*
Honey, I Blew Up the Kid (1992)*
Hook (1991)*
I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997)*
Iron Will (1994)*
I Still Know What You Did Last Summer (1998)*
Jungle 2 Jungle (1997)*
Liar, Liar (1997)*
A Little Princess (1996)*
Matilda (1996)*
A Perfect World (1993)*
Rich in Love (1993)
Rookie of the Year (1994)*
Shiloh (1997)*
Scream (1996)*
Scream II (1997)*
Sleepers (1996)*
Texas Chainsaw Massacre III (1990)